Interview with Karen Newman
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Nancy L. Buc: This is an oral history of Karen Newman, being conducted by Nancy Buc for the Lamphere project that the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women is putting on as part of Brown's two-hundred fiftieth celebration. Karen, I'd like to start by your introducing yourself and a little bit of your history at Brown.

Karen Newman: Well, I came to Brown in 1978 in the Department of Comparative Literature. I was promoted in 1984. When I arrived at Brown I was the only woman in my department. We also had a rule that the youngest person took the notes, so I was the secretary of the department. Rosalie Colie had been a part of the department, but she had died not long before I came. When I was promoted, I then had a joint appointment with English. And I spent most of my career at Brown, though I did move briefly to NYU for about five years several years ago, where I taught in the department of English. At Brown I have been chair of my department, I was director of the Pembroke Center for about five years, I think. And also Dean of the Graduate School during Ruth Simmons' and Bob Zimmer's tenure at Brown.

Buc: And you hold a chair at this point?

Newman: I do, I hold the Owen Walker**,** Class of '33 Chair in the Humanities.

Buc: In the humanities, so it's broader than, quote, "just Comp Lit."

Newman: [Laughter] —just Comp Lit, right. It's a chair that would go to anyone in the humanities, and isn't linked to our department. Where some are, but—

Buc: Okay. I'd like you to go back to your coming to Brown. You got your Ph.D. from Berkeley in—?

Newman: 1978, so this was my first job.

Buc: What was the hiring process like? And were you aware of the fact that the Consent Decree in the Lamphere case had been entered in the fall of 1977 and became final probably right around the time you were getting your offer?

Newman: No. I have to confess I didn't have any idea. I must have received the infamous postcard—

Buc: No, because that didn't come until after the decree.

Newman: Ah, well no I was not aware.

Buc: Okay, so were you hired through the standard process? A meeting at the MLA? How did you apply?

Newman: I applied because the job was advertised in the Modern Language Association job list, which was, and is the typical way for people in my field to find jobs that are advertised nationally. I applied in the standard way. I sent my *curriculum vitae*, I heard—I sent materials from my dissertation to be read, which is also standard practice. I was then called to participate in an interview at the Modern Language Association meetings, which that year were in Chicago. And since I was coming from Berkeley, I had only a little cloth coat, and it was pretty bad [laughter]. You know, I interviewed in a hotel room. Several of my senior colleagues interviewed me. The chair, Arnold Weinstein; a new incoming senior faculty member, Al Cooke; Michel-André Bossy I believe was there, and I—I think there were three. Then I came down to Brown subsequently and gave a talk, along with—I think one or two other people, I know at least one. And then I was offered the job.

Buc: And did you have then or do you have now, in retrospect, any sense of their interest in you because you were a woman? Interested in you, just neutrally? I mean, the Lamphere case must have been bustling around in their heads, if not in yours.

Newman: Right, I think that's the way it was. It certainly wasn't in mine. And I didn't have any impression from anything that was said to me during my visit or during the interview that they were only looking at women, or that I was being looked at because I was a woman. I didn't have any idea. The one thing that I do remember after I was hired is they asked me if I [5:00] taught anything having to do with gender or women. And I had taught at Berkeley a course on the female protagonist in the nineteenth-century novel, which was outside my field but also there was so much interest at that time in work on women, or with women as a theme, or women writers. And I taught that course my first year at Brown. And unexpectedly seventy people signed up, and they didn't have any TA available except for a guy who was a medievalist, and I think my department felt that was a little inappropriate—so did I. I didn't think that would probably be the best way to teach my first semester. So I had a lot of grading—

Buc: So you did all the—you had to grade all the papers yourself, and all the—

Newman: Exactly. [Laughter]

Buc: You mention that you were the only woman in the department at the time? And you said that because you were the junior person, you had to take the notes—

Newman: Right, it was whoever was the most junior.

Buc: That's like the Supreme Court. Just whoever's the most junior does it.

Newman: Right, and that could easily have been–and had been a man before that. Now we simply take turns alphabetically.

Buc: And did the specter of Colie hang over the department? Or had she been here such a short time that she—

Newman: Well she had—she was a very well known person in the field, and very admired by people in the department. And she had died under difficult circumstances, where it wasn't clear whether she had taken her own life or died in a drowning accident. So, yes I think she was missed.

Buc: And what was your introduction to the other women faculty at Brown—both junior and senior? How did you—did you get involved at all with the politics of women at Brown?

Newman: Well I remember Howard Swearer had a party right at the beginning of the year for all new faculty. And I—

Buc: Howard Swearer was—

Newman: President of Brown. And at his home on Power Street. And I remember that Naomi Schor was there—she had just been hired in the French Department—but as a tenured woman faculty member. And she came across the room and said, "Are you the feminist?" And I remember that still, that you could use the definite article as if there were only one. And we became fast friends. We saw each other once a week, and talked about what it was like being new. I also remember going to lunch at the Faculty Club that Karen Romer, who was a really important figure at Brown in the Dean's office, and advising, and so forth—I don't remember her exact title now. And she sort of was running that meeting, and it was a committee on women or the group of women faculty. And there was lots of joking about whenever women meet together, people are worried—the guys ask, you know, questions. "What are you all talking about in there?"

Buc: The old joke: when three men have lunch it's lunch, and when three women have lunch it's a revolution.

Newman: That's it [laughter].

Buc: Okay. You talked about your promotion—so that's from assistant professor to associate professor and the granting of tenure. Was that routine in your case? Was there any—by the time you were promoted the decree was in effect. Do you remember any of the circumstances, or did it just happen?

Newman: Well, I remember when my colleague Michel-André called me when I was still a graduate student finishing my degree, and telling me that they would like to interview me in Chicago at the MLA, he said, "You know if you get this job you will—" Or maybe it was when called me to offer the job, I don't remember the sequence—but I remember his saying and using the expression, "You know it'll be really important, you will have to be productive." And I understood what that meant, because I was already a professional, you know, up-coming professional in my field—that I would need to publish and

would be expected to have published a book by the time of my tenure hearing. So I was busy and active in my field [10:00] through those years, and did indeed have a book from a good press and articles coming out, and so forth. So I didn't ever think for myself that I was getting some easy ride.

Buc: Well, I didn't mean the question that way. But did you get, for example, the annual reviews or the regular reviews that the decree required?

Newman: Oh yes, that's right. I definitely got the annual reviews, and my department also had a tradition already of doing peer teaching evaluations. That is, faculty—we didn't just use student evaluations, but had senior faculty visit junior faculty classes. But they were a little uncomfortable with that, and so they invited me to their classes, as if the power dynamic made—

Buc: To teach their classes?

Newman: —didn't count. No, to come and visit and see. Since they were going to have to visit and evaluate mine, they invited me to come to theirs, without recognizing—I guess in a sense—that the power dynamic completely changed what that meant. So, but I do remember going to one of my senior colleague's classes and feeling as if he took the whole course to say—the whole fifty minutes to say what I said in about the first five, and that maybe I needed to slow down. [Laughter]

Buc: Oh, in terms of the speaking—all right, okay. But—what I'm groping for here is—your promotion from assistant professor to associate professor was pursuant to the terms of the decree. That is—we'll come back to this—to what the AAMC procedures were. But do you have any recollection that—of anybody's talking about that? Or did it just happen and they took care of all the paperwork?

Newman: Well, they certainly did what they were supposed to do about, sort of letting me know what the procedures were, and what the timing would be. But I was the one who prepared my dossier: a statement about my research, copies of all the materials, and so forth. I think that all... It's interesting, the time that I first had the sense that someone might, on the outside, perceive my being at Brown as being because Brown had to hire women was actually from someone outside of Brown. I was asked to be a facilitator for a conference held at Woods Hole by a group of faculty mainly at MIT, and I'm not sure how or why I got involved, but it had something to do also with science and the humanities—something like that. And I remember one of the organizers making a kind of a remark, "Well, you're probably there because…" You know, that sort of thing. So actually it was outside of Brown where—the only time I had a really pejorative sense of that. But certainly the women faculty were still abuzz with all the work that had gone on to—and the struggle and the contention through the seventies leading up to the decree itself.

Buc: You [coughing] excuse me. You got yourself elected to the Faculty Executive Committee in, I think 1984.

Newman: Right, I did.

Buc: How did that happen? Did you volunteer? Did somebody say, "come do this?"

Newman: Well, no, no. They had to have one junior person. And it was a good time for me because I was still junior, but basically I think—you know, my stuff was being sent out, and though I wasn't yet tenured I was late in the process. And so it wasn't—therefore it was perceived as less burdensome for a junior person who was already into the process. Also, I'm kind of an easy hit. I've always done a lot of stuff at Brown of that kind of work.

Buc: So that means after you got promoted you couldn't hold that slot any longer—

Newman: That's right

Buc: And that's when you go on the Affirmative Action Monitoring Committee?

Newman: Yes I did.

Buc: 1986. According to my notes.

Newman: That's right. [laughter]

Buc: What I'd like to talk about first with respect to the AAMC was what they were doing [15:00]. And just by way of introduction, the decree—as you know—the Consent Decree and the Lamphere case required that the university set up something, which came to be called the Affirmative Action Monitoring Committee, which had broad jurisdiction over searches for newly hired faculty at all levels, promotions from assistant professor to associate professor, and I guess from associate professor to professor as well. But what did they actually do? If there was a search, could the department make an offer before going through the AAMC? Or did you have to—?

Newman: No. In fact—

Buc: How did it work?

Newman: The way it worked was the committee—my memory is, and I might not be correct in this—but at least a proportion of us, not every single one of us, I think it was three, had to review. And we had a certain period of time to do it in, so that the offer could be made promptly and without causing undue delay. And so we—the materials were kept, and I'll talk about what the materials were—were kept in a room on the third floor of University Hall, or maybe the fourth floor. And we would go there and review them, and in the case of a hire we would look at the—there's a report that people filled out and it gave the proportion of men, the proportion of women, the proportion of minorities—

Buc: Who had applied.

Newman: Who had applied, and how many were going to be interviewed in those categories. And so we would review that. And then if they—at the point when they were making an offer, we would look at what those balances were. How many women there were in the pool, how many they were interviewing. And if they were interviewing no women, for example, and there were fifty percent of the pool was women, we would ask for some explanation for what were the problems with all of these candidates that you couldn't find one that you wanted to interview.

Buc: All of this was before a department could make an offer to the candidate they had chosen?

Newman: No, this was before they—this was at the point when they were bringing their top choices back to campus to—

Buc: I see, so they hadn't quite gotten as far as an offer.

Newman: That's right. That's when we—what we did was want to make sure that the departments were looking at candidates carefully.

Buc: So if the search had been appropriately done—let's just take a hypothetical. Suppose that they had half women and half men in the total applicant pool, but everybody being interviewed on campus was male.

Newman: Then you would ask for an explanation, and if you were convinced by it—and one of the things that we could then do was look at the applicant pool, and see if there was some disagreement, if there—and we always tried to involve—For example, if it was a social science appointment, the people on the committee who represented those areas would try to be the ones that reviewed the documents, just so that we were ensuring knowledge of the field in some way.

Buc: But through these procedures you could, in effect, block an appointment at least until you were convinced that it was okay?

Newman: Yes.

Buc: And what happened if you said, "No, we're going to block it."

Newman: Well, we never said, "No, we're going to block it." What we always said was, "Could you explain why you're doing this?"

Buc: Right, but if after all the back and forth and all the explanations you said no, you're still not satisfied, what happened? Do you remember that that ever happened in your time?

Newman: No. Because, what I think the Consent Decree did was ensure that departments really did their homework and looked, and chose, and interviewed the best candidates. And so as—I'll always remember,

maybe we'll get to this later, but in the faculty forum at the point [20:00] when the university was trying to vacate the decree, a colleague of mine in the English Department used the expression, "unaided virtue." He said what the Consent Decree provides is it aids virtue. Virtue was happening, people were doing what they were supposed to do, but they were doing it because we were watching.

Buc: Yeah, yeah. But the other part of this is it must have been an enormous amount of work. I mean, by the time you got on the AAMC it was five, six, seven years later from the entry of the decree. But it was a time when Brown was hiring. That means every assistant professor search the AAMC had to review. So there was a lot of work in the trenches, so to speak.

Newman: That's right. That's right.

Buc: And how about with promotions to tenure? From the assistant professor to the associate professor level, what was the process there, do you remember?

Newman: That I don't remember as well. I think we only looked if a woman was denied tenure. In other words, we weren't preventing men from being promoted. But we were asked to review any cases in which women weren't being promoted.

Buc: So at that point each candidate, male or female, stood on his or her own merits for promotion—

Newman: Exactly, and wasn't being compared to other candidates. Because when you come up for tenure they're just reviewing your materials, and there are outside evaluators who have written letters either on your behalf or saying, "Don't promote this person," and so forth.

Buc: Well that's sort of true, except in the Lamphere case itself one of the reasons given for not promoting her was that they had only so many tenure slots in the department under the staffing plan.

Newman: Right.

Buc: And I wonder if that ever came up later as well. Because if there are two candidates or three candidates for tenure who happened to come up in the same year and the department doesn't have the slots, it is comparative, isn't it?

Newman: Yes, but I don't remember that ever happening during my term in the AAMC. And also, you know, there was not a lot of hiring going on then. We were certainly doing better financially than Brown had been doing in the period when Lamphere was denied tenure, but still even in my case there was no other junior person hired in Comp Lit during my entire junior—term as a junior faculty member. And it wasn't until I was promoted—in fact, Susan Bernstein was the next junior person to be hired, and that wasn't until—

Buc: That was years later.

Newman: Yeah, years later. So in fact there was not a lot of hiring going on. No, that's not right actually, I'm mistaken. After I was hired we hired a person in Japanese and a person in Chinese.

Buc: Okay, so then the—

Newman: But still there was two years' difference, and two years' difference, so none of us ever came up at the same time. And I just don't know—

Buc: Although that may have been the case in other departments?

Newman: Right. That's what I said, I just don't know in other departments whether those kinds of points of competition emerged.

Buc: Do you remember hearing or having any disappointed women who had not been given tenure complaining to the AAMC during your time on the committee? Let's not use their names if they're not otherwise public.

Newman: I mean, I certainly remember cases that involved other departments. And—

Buc: So yes, there may have been some.

Newman: Yes. Or, there may have been that someone felt that they should've been hired and weren't, or—you know, that sort of thing.

Buc: You just raised something I hadn't thought of. Women who applied for jobs at Brown who didn't get them—whether as assistant professors or as associate professors, full professors, all had the right to—

Newman: And they often did.

Buc: —to come to the AAMC?

Newman: Well, or to inquire legally of why they weren't. And that would always go not to the AAMC, but to the University Council.

Buc: So AAMC didn't hear the disappointed applicant cases?

Newman: Not usually, though [25:00] in some cases if someone wasn't just an—yeah we didn't hear the disappointed applicant. In the case I'm thinking of it was somebody who actually came, and then the question was how or whether she would stay or not.

Buc: As I read the report—the AAMC filed annual reports. And it looks like there were between twenty and thirty applications a year that they had to review. And there were how many people on the AAMC?

Newman: I think we were five.

Buc: Were you chosen by the plaintiffs or the faculty?

Newman: I think I was elected by the faculty.

Buc: Did it make any difference, do you remember, once people were chosen?

Newman: No, no. And, you know, part—

Buc: Was there a—was it like the Supreme Court? Was there a faculty side and a plaintiff side?

Newman: No, I don't think so. And, you know, Louise was, as the years passed, of course, further and further away. And so she often relied on people she had known from before. But no, I didn't ever feel that there was ever that kind of disagreement.

Buc: Just curious. And one of the other things that had to happen under the decree: the decree established goals and timetables for both tenured and non-tenured women, through—as I recall—1987. But they had to be updated, because depending on the size of the faculty, and the pools of people, pools of the people who'd gotten Ph.D.s in the relevant years. Brown doesn't have too many non-Ph.D.s.

Newman: Yes, I was very involved in that part of the AAMC's work—the updating of the goals.

Buc: Well since the '87 fell right in the middle of your chairship. Can you talk about that a little bit? Let me back up first and ask this question: the goals and the timetables are stated in terms of university-wide numbers. And yet, decisions about how many people departments get to hire, and who they hire, and whether those people are male or female, happen at the departmental level. Can you talk a little bit about how the goals, university-wide, got translated or didn't get translated into these decisions that were happening department by department? Because if one department did well but another department did horribly, you couldn't get there.

Newman: We also worked to ensure that every department had some woman faculty member. And the two most difficult departments were Economics and Computer Science. And they always claimed it was impossible, they couldn't find anyone. So then we would always ask to see what special measures they were taking to try and recruit top faculty who were women.

Buc: And that's because the decree actually required departments that had no women to make, what the decree calls "special efforts."

Newman: "Special efforts," that's right, that's right. And one of the things we also did was review when faculty members had an issue with the department. So that if a young woman member of a department was feeling that the environment of the department was inhospitable, then they could come to the AAMC. And I remember a particular case of a young woman who—actually in Computer Science—who was Jewish. And she was practicing, and the department had a practice of getting together for drinks on Friday afternoon at the end of the week, and they wanted her to participate. And she didn't want to because she wanted to go to services. So, I was involved in helping negotiate that with the then-chair of Computer Science, and trying to get him to understand precisely the kinds of issues that make for a hospitable or inhospitable environment. And that was also an interesting case, because it's where different kinds of differences come together in interesting ways. He also hassled her about [30:00] putting a coke can on her wooden desk in her office. She left. She had a good offer elsewhere, and didn't feel that it was an environment she wanted to stay in.

Buc: I've read some of the paper in correspondence between the AAMC and those two departments: Computer Science and Economics. The Computer Science paper has a much different tone. They say very nicely how hard they're working at it. The Economics Department can only be described as truculent.

Newman: Yes, and I think Computer Science was working at it. And this was a later date when they had finally succeeded in hiring a woman, and a different chair.

Buc: Because there's one document in which the Computer Science Department reports that they had a woman who was a visiting assistant professor. And they begged her, they say, to apply for a job. They had an opening as an assistant professor the following year, but she followed her husband to Harvard. And that sounded reasonably credible, and is a problem generally that everybody is familiar with.

Newman: Right.

Buc: All right, so these goals—

Newman: That still happens.

Buc: Well it does, although sometimes now it happens the other way.

Newman: That's right.

Buc: We both know of at least one full professor at Brown of the female variety whose husband followed her here.

Newman: That's right [laughter].

Buc: Let's talk about—a little bit about this goals and timetables thing. The university had—and I want to tie it to Brown's efforts unilaterally to vacate the decree. And it looks like Brown started talking about

vacating the decree as early as 1984, from the documents. And before we go to the goals and timetables and how that ties in, can you talk a little bit about why the university—the administration of the university—felt so oppressed by this decree? That barely five years later—1984—they started talking about vacating. What was bothering them so much, do you know?

Newman: Well, I think at the time—I don't remember now exactly what year Gregorian joined.

Buc: This was all Swearer.

Newman: No, I know. But what I'm saying is I think—as you know, Howard got some grief for settling. Howard Swearer got some grief from some members of the larger Brown community for agreeing to the consent decree and settling the case rather than taking it to court. And so I think he also felt that as soon as the university had sort of cleaned up its act, we should put it behind us. That we were doing the right thing, and so forth. And also I think as time passed, and Howard thought he was leaving—or that then he became interested in taking care of that piece of business before a new person would be recruited, and so forth. So I think there was a period of time during which those two different issues were at stake.

Buc: Well Howard didn't leave until 1988.

Newman: But that's only four years. You said they started in 1984, and he left in '88. He definitely knew he was leaving a year in advance.

Buc: So that's '87—

Newman: I'm just saying I think there were different issues at stake. One, the response that much of the community had had to Howard's choice and decision on arriving to settle. And later as he wanting to leave a kind of clean slate for his successor.

Buc: The way that—

Newman: I see you're leery, but you know, in legal time three years is not that long. [laughter]

Buc: That's certainly… Okay, we'll leave it there. So the goals for tenured and untenured faculty, we do agree that the decree itself provided for them through 1987. And they needed then to be updated if the decree were to continue in effect. And it seems to have been the updating of the goals and the timetables [35:00] that especially propelled the university to want to get rid of the decree. And can you talk a little bit about how that all played out?

Newman: Well, it's interesting because the AAMC was sort of between the two opposing parties. That is, Louise Lamphere wanted a much higher number than the university. They were quite—

Buc: For a new goal?

Newman: For a new goal.

Buc: Post '87.

Newman: And they were quite far apart. And the AAMC took a kind of middle ground because we—I mean, one of the big issues was whether or not attrition should be counted or not. And Louise felt, rightly, that—Louise Lamphere, whom I had never met at that time at all—felt that the university shouldn't get some kind of reward for when women left by not having to—therefore lowering the goals. Because then you could just make it an unpleasant environment and you wouldn't—and women would leave. And they should have to make—the university should have to make—all of the best efforts it can to retain women, and so forth. So the AAMC agreed with that position, but also thought it was true that people leave for many different reasons, not because it's a bad environment necessarily, but because families are trying to be together, or somebody gets an offer in California and doesn't like the New England winter, whatever. So we thought that there should be some attention to recognizing that every loss was not a loss because of some failure on Brown's part. And so we, on the AAMC, took a kind of middle position about the numbers.

Buc: And, but there was quite a lot of debate. I mean, I remember it went on for years. As to how to calculate, and—

Newman: Looking—who was—you know, there was debate about the pools. And where the numbers came from, and whether we could agree upon them in the different pools. There was also the issue of having a woman in each department, and therefore the departments that had still not managed to attain that. There was the attrition that lasted quite a long time. And also, you know, we would sometimes—as I remember it, the plaintiff's side would make a proposal and the university would—then there would be a period of elapsed time before there would be a judgment on it. And then, you know, people would have to argue again.

Buc: I remember, there's one letter from—I think probably Maurice Glicksman or John Quinn to either the plaintiffs or to the AAMC that dealt with that attrition question that you're talking about. Where they say, "Look, these aren't all our fault. Barbara Lewalski went to Harvard for a chair, Joan Scott went to the Institute for Advanced Study, one died, what do you want from us?"

Newman: And that was—so the AAMC, I think was a very reasonable body. And we felt that those were legitimate points of view, but we also felt that all attrition should not be—that if in fact the university were rewarded by being able to count all attrition against the goals, they would, in effect, have an incentive to make it not such a great environment in some cases.

Buc: It was the AAMC, I think, that introduced into that debate the concept of full utilization, which the decree also requires. Which, apart from the numbers, also means that every department—or at least every discipline—is supposed to have as many women faculty members at the various levels as the pools of

available Ph.Ds. would have yielded by that time. And so, you distinguished—and in fact in your letters to Judge Pettine dealing with this issue [40:00]—you really emphasized the full utilization part of it, as the other part of the decree that had to be given effect.

Newman: We did. Because we felt that it would be dangerous to—we knew that the desire on the part of the university to vacate the decree was around [laughter]—

Buc: Well, they kept telling you.

Newman: —and at work. They kept telling us. And we felt that it would be particularly dangerous to leave the university to "unaided virtue" if there were still departments who had no women at all.

Buc: There was also a tension, which you exploited very effectively. This goes back to the question of the overall goals, which are numbers for the university as a whole, versus full utilization, which breaks it down more. At least by discipline, if not by department.

Newman: Instead of letting the humanities take all the—because humanities had higher pools, and there are also areas of the university even today that are less well-paid, where the teaching course load is higher, and so forth. So we wanted to be sure that it wasn't that English and the languages were doing all of the work, but that we were also ensuring that areas of the sciences, physical and biological, and the social sciences also had women in their ranks.

Buc: So this came to its first head in the fall of 1987, when the university was threatening to go to court unilaterally—by unilaterally I mean without the agreement of either the plaintiffs, or the AAMC, or anybody but themselves—to try to vacate the decree. And there was a faculty forum that fall, and since you were the chair of the AAMC, you presided over this forum. You didn't, you weren't chairing it, but you made a speech about why you thought this was too soon. What did—

Newman: I did, and John Quinn was the Dean of the Faculty and he was the university representative of that position. Well, I think I've sort of said what and why we felt the way we did. And we were not allowed to take a vote, because there is no vote at a forum, but we did do a straw vote, and overwhelmingly the faculty supported the continuation of the decree. And I think if you look at the minutes, one of the things that people said over and over again—and I think it was Arlene Gorton who used this expression—"if it ain't broke, why fix it?" And I think—and also in that forum—it was a very interesting moment—Ken Miller, who is a tenured full professor now, stood up and made a statement that he believed that Brown was a better institution because of the Consent Decree, because the Consent Decree ensured that we hired the best candidate every time. And he was a man who had been hired in Biomed, there were certainly women in the pool with him. And I think, you know, that's a really important point to underline. That it's not that the Consent Decree required that women be hired, it's that in circumstances where people's credentials were equal, women had to be hired. But if the man were the better candidate, hire him. And they did.

Buc: So it was the —the effect was that if you did a search, a full search, and really worked hard to get the best people to apply, you then had your choice of the best people.

Newman: Absolutely.

Buc: Male, female—

Newman: Absolutely. And one of the ways in which Brown had worked prior to the Consent Decree was people would just call up their buddy at Harvard, or Princeton, or somewhere and say, "Who've you got for me?" And Brown was sort of in that—often in that position. And so doing national searches, I think was a very important part of how the eighties propelled Brown into a different position with regard to its reputation, and research profile.

Buc: That's interesting. So you would argue that the Decree is part of what made [45:00] Brown's striking improvement occur?

Newman: Yes, absolutely. I mean, I believe that categorically [laughter]

Buc: At least one former provost agrees with you. There's paper to that effect—

Newman: Is it Maurice?

Buc: Yes, Maurice Glicksman. All right, so after this faculty forum the AAMC then went to meet with Howard Swearer, and according to the minutes of that meeting you told him that there was overwhelming opposition to Brown's doing this.

Newman: We did.

Buc: And he must've listened to you, because it was a year later that they then did go to court all by themselves, and lost. And you were off the AAMC by that time—

Newman: Right, and Mary Ann Doane was, I think—

Buc: But you do remember that they lost?

Newman: I do.

Buc: And you perhaps remember also, that essentially what Judge Pettine said in denying Brown's motion was that they had done okay on the goals and timetables, especially for non-tenured women, and lifted the goals and timetables entirely for the non-tenured women. But that they had not achieved full utilization, which was your—

Newman: Expression.

Buc: And not only yours, but that you were the spokesperson for full utilization. And so basically you won your case. Must've been gratifying.

Newman: It was.

Buc: [Laughter] And then after that apparently you yourself went back to your —other academic pursuits.

Newman: I did. And you know, something that's interesting about that is—you know, it was not a rancorous meeting, for example, that forum. John Quinn is a friend of mine, a colleague, someone I admire. He went on to be the president of the University of Tennessee. And—but he had been told that this was something—and you can kind of tell that if you read the minutes—that he was required to do this. And he was talking to a lot of his own colleagues as well about—who disagreed with him—

Buc: And he had been an AAMC member.

Newman: He had been.

Buc: At an earlier time.

Newman: Right, right. And so it does give you some sense of what's required of you as an administrator sometimes, to put it into effect, or to work toward positions that you might not fully subscribe to.

Buc: You and he had an exchange over the so-called "Nobel prize problem—"

Newman: Right [laughter]

Buc: —which Brown always adduced. That if you had to wait to make an offer to a Nobel Prize winner of the male variety, he would never come. And in fact there was one of those. They had a—was it Joseph Brodsky, do you remember that one? They wanted to appoint him, the Nobel prize-winning poet.

Newman: Yes, but I don't think—

Buc: They went to court ultimately to get an exception, which of course was granted instantly—

Newman: And then he came!

Buc: Did he come or not come?

Newman: Well, I thought that he supposedly came, but never appeared. That's my memory. But I don't think anyone ever thought that the AAMC and the Consent Decree and its rules had any negative effect on that kind of recruitment as we—as those interchanges suggest. I opposed anecdotal arguments.

Buc: There's a line that they use at FDA all the time that the plural of anecdote is not data.

Newman: Right, perfect. I love that. I'm going to write that down [laughter]

Buc: The [pause] once, a couple of years later Judge Pettine—although he refused to vacate the Decree—essentially said, "Listen, you people. Get yourselves together and agree on how to do this." But that happened after you had left the AAMC. I mean it did happen—

Newman: Right. And just to go back to one issue you raised, Nancy, I think—I mean we should look at the timing because I know that Gregorian was very eager to vacate the Decree. And I think that even though he didn't start 'til '88 he was hired earlier than '88, so the period in '87 when Howard wanted to vacate was that period when, particularly, I think, Gregorian who had all these connections in New York and wanted to be able to bring people and this and that, felt that his hands would be tied. So I think the nexus [50:00] around '87 to '88 had to do with that transition of presidents, and Gregorian's desire to be able to, you know, bring some of his illustrious people to Brown, and so forth.

Buc: Would you also surmise, though—I mean, that was Gregorian. He would routinely want to fix things that other people hadn't been able to fix.

Newman: Rights, right [laughter], yeah.

Buc: And so—

Newman: But he—I mean I talked to him about it after he was here because, you know, he really felt that the university's hands shouldn't be tied was sort of the metaphor that he would use. And—

Buc: But there is some resonance to that that cuts the other way. The whole basis that—the primary basis on which Brown defended the case in the first place was that courts and procedure shouldn't mess with the wonderful academic prerogative of deciding on their own faculty. And in fact the Brown faculty moved to intervene in the Lamphere litigation on the grounds that they were wonderful, and all very talented, and should have the right, male—

Newman: To make their own decisions.

Buc: Yes. Some of them were female, of course, but to make their own decisions. And so when Gregorian talked about not wanting his hands to be tied, I think maybe he, but certainly not everyone, was sort of tone deaf to the wrong resonance of that. The reason there was a Decree was because Brown, although it never admitted it, had been, arguably, discriminating.

Newman: That's right.

Buc: I'm not suggesting that they were or weren't; they didn't admit any guilt. But you're quite right about what Gregorian wanted to do, because in the event—the Decree was vacated in May of 1989, and Brown put out a press release so that Gregorian could announce it at Commencement. Do you remember that? I'd forgotten—

Newman: I don't remember that detail of the timing.

Buc: He announced at Commencement, "We have vacated the Decree!"

Newman: But I do remember when it was vacated, because I was very involved in the establishment of the new procedures and committee—

Buc: That was my next question.

Newman: —in relation to after the Decree was vacated.

Buc: So what followed?

Newman: Well, from the outset, Louise Lamphere had asked that minorities also be included in the Consent Decree, to be monitored and to have goals and timetables, and the university opposed that. So then when—so the question became, when the Decree was vacated, whether there should be one committee doing what the AAMC had done for both women and minorities, or whether there should be two committees. And initially many people felt one committee was good, because one committee is always better than two committees. But the—I can't remember its acronym—COFE, or something like that—the Committee on Faculty Minority Hiring, or—

Buc: And they opposed that.

Newman: And they opposed that. And I remember writing a note to Maurice [Glicksman], and saying, "We think one committee is a good idea, but—" And for other reasons than just "one committee is always better than two committees. " We really thought that it would be good to have one group that was doing the sort of watchdog work across the university, so there wouldn't be something going on here that somebody else didn't know about, and things like that. But that group felt not—that they wanted to have a separate committee, and so we said fine. Then lets keep them separate.

Buc: And is that informal—not informal, but is that committee that was the successor to the AAMC, except that it was no longer supervised by the court—is that still in existence? Do you know?

Newman: No, now what we have is a—we have an affirmative action officer who looks at the same kind of documentation and materials that used to be reviewed by the AAMC, and has to approve every single search and offer that's made.

Buc: Brown had an affirmative action officer then too.

Newman: Mm hmm. But [55:00] [pause].

Buc: So that committee is no longer in existence. How long did it last? Do you know? Do you remember?

Newman: I don't remember.

Buc: Because there doesn't seem to be any paper—

Newman: Oh yeah?

Buc: —about it. I can't find anything.

Newman: I don't remember—

Buc: Did you serve on it?

Newman: After? No. I mean, I served during—on the AAMC, but I didn't serve on the committee subsequently.

Buc: And I have a couple more, not too many more questions. But one of the things that was striking at that time of that faculty forum that you were talking about, in 1987, is that at that time Brown was way ahead of most of our competitors in women faculty. But that's no longer the case. Parity has, more or less, come to women at our competitors. Was it all worth it?

Newman: Well, I think partly the reason parity has come at our peer institutions is because—you know, after Brown and some other institutions who had similar kinds of situations, people began to recognize, as they increasingly do, that you simply can't afford to leave out fifty percent of the talent. And so—fifty-one I believe it is. And so I think that part of what happened was change—the kind of social change that was happening in lots of different arenas. You know, that people became more enlightened and realized that if you're really dedicated to a certain kind of research success that, again, you want to use all the talent you've got. And so—and I think, actually this is interesting in relation to minority hiring, is that often what you hear is just these laments, "Oh, there's still only this many, you know, African-Americans, or this many minority—" But what's left in out in those discussions is always the question of the pool. And that's what was always a crucial part of the Consent Decree, is that there's a certain kind of realistic expectation if you've got a pool that you can turn to, whereas if you say, "Why aren't there more African-Americans?" And there's one percent availability, and everybody's competing for that one percent,

you've got different kinds of—a different kind of struggle. And that's happening at the level of students as well, as you know. That there's huge competition for those top students entering Brown, and Princeton, and Harvard, and Stanford, and so forth.

Buc: I think that's right. I think that the Decree was very well crafted to take account of the reality of the size of the pools. And on the other hand, that often was used as an excuse. I sat through many Corporation meetings where the answer to "Why don't we have more fill-in-the-blanks" was always "No pool, no pool."

Newman: Right, right.

Buc: And the evidence was, in many areas, to the contrary. Although that is exactly the argument that both your friends in Computer Sciences and your friends in Economics used.

Newman: Well, and their pools were smaller. No question about that. But, they weren't non-existent. [laughter]

Buc: Exactly. I want to talk about one other aspect of this that kind ties together both what the case was about and your own fields of academic enterprise, and that's the whole question of—in quotes—"Women's Studies." Part of what the case was about was Lamphere's shift in emphasis in her scholarship from Navajos to women—

Newman: From Navajos to women, right.

Buc: And it's not exactly clear how much the case was about that, we'll talk—that's going to be an important subject in this. But you mentioned that you were asked if you taught anything having to do with women's perspectives on anything—to broaden out women's studies. And the answer was yes, and you went ahead and did it. Would a man have been asked the same question?

Newman: No, of course not. And I think, though—

Buc: And today?

Newman: —that's... well, whereas now men would teach it—I mean, still, statistically speaking, there are more women doing it than men. But still identity politics has sort of broken down to some degree at least. I remember once, Maurice said to me—Maurice Glicksman, Provost, said, "So, I understand now what the Pembroke Center does. You're not studying women, but you're studying difference, and gender, and the social construction of sexual difference. So what you mean is that the Nancy Duke Lewis Chair could be a man." And I remember saying, "Right, Maurice. The Nancy Duke Lewis Chair can be a man when there are women in lots of other chairs at this institution, in this university." You know, that is, he got the principle, but the direction he wanted to go with it was—had a certain irony to it since there was in fact

only one chaired professor for many—woman professor—for many, many years, and was the Nancy Duke Lewis Chair that Joan Scott held. And subsequently Naomi Schor.

Buc: Naomi Schor?

Newman: Yeah.

Buc: Hadn't Rosemary Colie been the Nancy Duke Lewis Chair? Was that her name? Her first name? What's was her name?

Newman: Nancy Duke Lewis—

Buc: No, your predecessor—

Newman: Yeah, Rosalie Colie. I think she had held it before.

Buc: Rosalie Colie. She was Nancy Duke Lewis, and it was when she died that the chair stayed vacant for a while, while they sorted it out.

Newman: Right, right.

Buc: But that then—but Maurice's comment, ironic or not, and your response really sums it all up, doesn't it? The millennium will arrive when everybody of all descriptions is studying all different kinds of identity politics, and ultimately maybe there will be no identity politics.

Newman: Yeah, because the thing about the study of women—I mean, what kind of research can you do in any area, whether it's pharmaceutical research, or the history of the past—Ancient Greece, modern England, whatever—if you don't study women and their roles and contributions? Then you're, in effect—I mean, it's sort of the same argument—you can't afford to give up on fifty-one percent of the talent. You also aren't doing serious intellectual work and research if you're not looking at half the data.

Buc: But then it's no different—I mean all these arguments are different—but it's analogous to the argument about the nature of the canon. About what you study. Is it all Western literature, or—

Newman: Yes, I think you're absolutely right, that's part of what's happened in terms of the canon, too. And its opening, as people say, is precisely recognizing that there is all of this literature being written, or [pause] you know, medical—I mean all kinds of things happening all over the world, and that's why now globalization and internationalization of research is so important to the university. And I think you're absolutely right that it's the same argument—

Buc: Just a different kind of difference—

Newman: Right, a different kind of difference. Right.

Buc: Thank you very much.

Newman: Thank you.

Buc: Have I failed to ask you anything where you'd like to make a speech? What else do you want to say?

Newman: I don't know, I was thinking about some of the things that we—you know, some of the, sort of, events that happened. And I was trying to remember—that might be more fun for your—for the film—than just a talking head answering questions. But maybe I've done those.

Buc: Well, you've answered—you certainly said one of things I know that you think is the most important, which is that the effect of the decree was to improve Brown's faculty across the board. Male, female, and—

Newman: And I believe that so strongly. And I think other people do, too. I don't think I'm alone in that, in my judgment of its impact. So, yeah.

Buc: Good, we'll all take—Louise can take credit for that.

Newman: [Laughter] yeah.

Buc: Thank you very much.

Newman: Thank you.

[End of interview]