

Queer Newark Oral History Project

Interviewee: Yvonne Hernandez

Interviewer: Beryl Satter

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Location: Conklin Hall, Rutgers-Newark

Yvonne Hernandez: ...turn my phone down

Beryl Satter: ...recording on this as well. I think we are good. So um...so, tell me, Yvonne, welcome. I'm so delighted to be talking to you

Yvonne Hernandez: Thank you. I'm excited to be here

Beryl Satter: yeah. So will you, um...when were you born? What's your birthday?

Yvonne Hernandez: I was born September 15th

Yvonne Hernandez: 19...19...57

Beryl Satter: ahh

Yvonne Hernandez: rock and roll era

Beryl Satter: right. *Approximately* my age. And um...where?

Yvonne Hernandez: in Newark, NJ.

Beryl Satter: okay

Yvonne Hernandez: I was born, I- the first place I ever lived was in the North Ward. It was the 7th avenue projects

Yvonne Hernandez: It was on the 12th floor. I believe it was the 12th floor. From what I remember my mother telling me it was the 12th floor. And the buildings were new, so my mother was the very first person that lived on the 12th floor 7th Avenue projects. I remember swimming...in Rotunda Pool. I remember when I was a little girl there was this beautiful black woman...carried me on her shoulder because I was afraid to go in the water. And she was like, "Come on, honey, just get on my back and you'll be safe" and I got on her back and true to her words, she made sure that I was safe

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I learned how to ice skate in Branch Brook Park. It's a roller-skating rink now but it was an ice-skating rink at the time. Branch Brook Ice-skating Rink. I went there for many years as a child, as a teenager went there...um...yeah I went to east- that- after that, after the projects, um...about the age of 2 or 3 we moved into the Ironbound in Newark. And...that's where I spent, you know, my life with my mother. uh high school, I went to- well, I went to Oliver- I went to South Street School, but South Street School only goes up to the 4th grade. And from there we transferred to Oliver St School. And then I went to East Side High School.

Beryl Satter: So did you stay in one place in the Ironbound that-or did you guys moved around in there?

Yvonne Hernandez: We moved a couple of times. First place we lived, was on Harper St. In the Ironbound. After that, we moved to Goble St. G-O-B-L-E St. We lived at, in a- a nice house. My mother, you know, she....saved her pennies and rented a really nice house with a really nice yard for th- for her four kids, 'cause my mother was a widow. My mother wasn't a single mother. I

think there's a difference. Yeah

Beryl Satter: My mother was a widow.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah (3:09) My mother was widowed when- when I-

Beryl Satter: but you're still a sing-I mean, the end, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, I know, but I always see a- I don't know, to me I see one as a choice

Beryl Satter: yeah, one's not a choice

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah. So I mean, but she was single

Beryl Satter: when did your father pass away?

Yvonne Hernandez: he passed away when I was six

Beryl Satter: mm.

Yvonne Hernandez: need to take my jacket off. Once you reach a certain age, you need to take your jacket off

Beryl Satter: me-yeah I know (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: flashbacks! In a whole different form.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: uh my father died when I was six. Yeah, he was-yeah I was six

Beryl Satter: and you, are you the youngest? Of the four?

Yvonne Hernandez: there were four of us, I'm number two

Beryl Satter: You're number two so your mother had a two really young kids

Yvonne Hernandez: well, two, and then my mother was going to get married. Like, years later she met this gentleman, and then my brother and my sister were born

Beryl Satter: oh, oh so you were the youngest originally

Yvonne Hernandez: yes, my oldest brother and I are same mother and father

Beryl Satter: ok got it

Yvonne Hernandez: and then after my father passed away, my mom met this very nice-I remember he was such a beautiful person, his name was Frank, I don't remember his last name. And he was very good to us and I really loved him, I was like "wow, this is-he's just so cool." Very nice guy. I don't know what happened to them, they just wound up breaking up and my mother had...the two, my brother and my sister.

Beryl Satter: Yeah. So, um...what did she do?

Yvonne Hernandez: my mother worked in a factory called Pyro Plastics. And then after that she started going to, I don't recall what college, I *think* it was Rutgers, I'm...I have to check that out. And uh...she...graduated and she went to teach at uh South St. School where she taught for 35 years

Beryl Satter: huh.

Yvonne Hernandez: Kindergarten and first grade

Beryl Satter: hmmm.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: So when did you become aware of being gay?

Yvonne Hernandez: oh my goodness I didn't realize that I knew it until I started thinking afterwards like, wow, I used to love Bewitched, and Morticia, and um...oh who was the other one, The Munsters, Lilly!

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: and Genie and why can't I see her belly button and, just...I was always fascinated with...you know the girl that sat in front of me. Her hair would smell so good, and I just uh...you know. As a child I didn't realize it, you know, until I got to high school, and we're talking about the early 70s where you can get beat up or made fun of or...ostracized, so I never really told any of my friends.

Beryl Satter: Did you know any people- did you see other gay people getting hassled at school, or just the way people talked?

Yvonne Hernandez: Just this one young boy he was in- oh it's the strangest story. His name is Daniel. I don't remember his last name, a Cuban boy. He was very, very, very feminine. And he always talked with this lisp and he was so gay, you know, but nobody made fun of him. None of the kids made fun of him, he always just wanted to be with the girls and do our hair. And we went on our 8th grade trip...they gave the 8th graders, before graduation, a trip to Bear Mountain. And a group of us kids went to play spin the bottle, and the bottle pointed to him and he was my very first kiss. And...his name was Daniel, his name now is Maritza, and she is a girl now. And I was like, wow, that must've been some kiss! (laughs)

Beryl Satter: (laughs). Are you still friends?

Yvonne Hernandez: No, the last time I saw her was...oh god I think it was about 20 years ago, maybe more. I was on Pacific St in Newark and I saw her and she came over to me she goes, "Oh my god Yvonne!" And she looked so cute, little pink dress, I mean, she had a little pink dress and her little heels 'cause it was in the summer time, it was sandals, you know, breasts, curves, and just everything.

Beryl Satter: hmm. But you didn't know what her story was after-

Yvonne Hernandez: no, after we both went to the same high school, after high school I-

Beryl Satter: you lost track

Yvonne Hernandez: we just lost track and then

Beryl Satter: But

Yvonne Hernandez: I saw her

Beryl Satter: yeah. But here's this very feminine kid and no one's bugging...

Yvonne Hernandez: nobody ever...and if they di-I don't remember anybody making fun of him. But the boys and...for the time it was in the 60s, which was *very* strange

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: Maybe he did get beat up and all of this, but I never saw it

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. But you were aware that kids could, that could happen, so you want-did you kind of self-monitor a little bit to make sure, like, that you fit in, or? I mean, how did, you know, 'cause you start by saying that the atmosphere was a little rough, you know

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: for gay people then, so what, what year- you entered high school...I can probably figure it out

Yvonne Hernandez: in '75

Beryl Satter: you entered in s-

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm sorry, I graduated in '75

Beryl Satter: that's right, you entered in

Yvonne Hernandez: '71

Beryl Satter: '71, right

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: So um...but yeah, so you kinda knew that it wasn't acceptable

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: but nevertheless...you, I mean, did it affect you? It was enough to sort of know inside that you should be careful, or?

Yvonne Hernandez: well I knew because I remember as a little girl you know uh...there was this one gentleman who lived in the neighborhood and he was very feminine and he...he had troube-I mean, he was always afraid to walk down the street and...you know, or to go anywhere with his boyfriend

Beryl Satter: so you knew, you- wait, so this when you were very little

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah when I was, yeah

Beryl Satter: you were aware that this guy had a boyfriend

Yvonne Hernandez: oh yeah, I knew it

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I mean, everybody knew it and he was very out for the time but he did get you know he got hassled a lot

Beryl Satter: mmhmm, yeah. So that

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: was just sort of something people knew, do you remember his name?

Yvonne Hernandez: no, I don't remember his name

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: no. I remember he was a Puerto Rican guy, curly hair, but I always, growing up, I always saw...and heard of gay people being harassed and beat up and my mother used to say oh god- there was, whenever any kind of subject about lesbianism would come up, my mother was always like, you know, "those horrible women," and she used to say things that were not nice, like, in Spanish she would say, oh, in Spanish, "etruhan dose[?]," which means women just rubbing up against each other, you know, just "truhandos[?]," they're just messing themselves all up, how gross is that? and I was like, well that doesn't seem so gross to me...I don't know, I think it's kinda cute

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: but I never said anything to my mother. So when I- you know, as a teenager, when I was 19, I went to work at a place on Market St called High Voltage. It was a little boutique, and all the way in the back of the boutique there was a counter that sold pocketbooks, earrings, sunglasses, accessories. And uh was a girl that worked back there, her name is Joyce Taylor. I tried looking for her on Facebook, I just, there are a *million* Joyce Taylors. If I remember her middle name... And I believe she works for the police department here in Newark. Because I went to pay a ticket once, about 25 year ago, I went to pay a ticket, and she was behind the count-you know, behind the glass, taking the money from the people that owed um tick-you know, that owed for tickets.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (12:19)

Yvonne Hernandez: And she looked at me, and she said, "Yvonne, is that"- Well she- I'm jumping ahead but

Beryl Satter: 's okay

Yvonne Hernandez: when I, when I worked at High Voltage, a very cute African American girl, I was 19 she was 26, I thought, "Oh my god, this old lady. What am I doing with this old lady, she all of 26?"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: But we started dating each other

Beryl Satter: was that your first girlfriend?

Yvonne Hernandez: my very first girlfriend. She had a girlfriend and uh they had-they broke up and, I used to look at her all the time, I thought she was just the prettiest thing, and she was, cute, little, her hair, she had very short hair. And then one day, she just after working there for about 2 years

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: One day she just asked if I wanted to go out one night.

Beryl Satter: so, let's see, you had worked there for 2 years, so

Yvonne Hernandez: about two years, mmhmm

Beryl Satter: was that 19-21 or 17-19?

Yvonne Hernandez: um, 19-21.

Beryl Satter: alright so, you've been there two years, and then she just asked you this?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, yes...so I would be...

Beryl Satter: what-was it, it was clear what it was, what she was asking?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, because she kept looking at me really strange, the whole day was really awkward and weird and just didn't feel right. It felt right and it didn't, like an oxymoron kind of thing going on inside. And she kept lookin' at, she kept lookin-it was something, "Why is she staring, am I gonna get fired?" 'Cause she was-she was the manager back there

Beryl Satter: oh!

Yvonne Hernandez: and she just asked me if I wanted to go out with her. (13:55) And I didn't even hesitate, I said, "sure."

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: And the first time we went out, we went to a place on East 62nd St, I believe it was East 62nd St, called The Sahara.

Beryl Satter: In Manhattan?

Yvonne Hernandez: In Manhattan.

Beryl Satter: to The Sahara

Yvonne Hernandez: The Sahara. Two floors, first floor was the bar, I'll never forget what that looked like. All the way in the back, stairs, going upstairs, another bar upstairs, dance hall upstairs, you don't dance upstairs- *downstairs*, you dance upstairs.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. Was it all women?

Yvonne Hernandez: All women.

Beryl Satter: So let's see, this is when you're 21

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, 21.

Beryl Satter: And- and she- but she-was she 26 then

Yvonne Hernandez: no, no

Beryl Satter: or was she 28 then?

Yvonne Hernandez: when I was 19

Beryl Satter: when you started, she was 26?

Yvonne Hernandez: and she was, no she was, when I was 21, yeah, I was 19 she was 26

Beryl Satter: okay.

Yvonne Hernandez: (at the same time) yeah

Beryl Satter: Sorry. (laughs) I just-

Yvonne Hernandez: no I-it's all so...jumbled in my head right now

Beryl Satter: that's fine

Yvonne Hernandez: and it's..

Beryl Satter: so go ahead

Yvonne Hernandez: kinda

Beryl Satter: So you went to The Sahara

Yvonne Hernandez: We went to The Sahara, and we just started dating after that. We started dating, and I remember she had fantastic taste in clothes. And shoes, and she just loved to wear nice clothes and...one time I had wanted to buy a pair of shoes like at some kind of Payless kind of store, and she was like "Are you kidding me? We'll go-Let's go to Macy's, let's go here," (inaudible) uh Hahne's & Co. at the time, used to shop at Hahne's & Co, Bamberger's,

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: and uh she used to always buy me things. She used to buy me shoes, and, you know, "We're going out, but I want you to look nice"

Beryl Satter: Where would you go out?

Yvonne Hernandez: oh god, we would- into the city, we would go into the Village,

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: uh we would go and get something to eat, uh we were together for a while. For...about a good-not too long, I guess like a year and a half. The first summer we were together, we went to the beach, the Jersey Shore, she *loved* New York.

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: So we were in New York a lot, and we went down to the place called Dapper Dan's, which was a lesbian bar also.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: We went to The Dutchess, which was in the Village, you remember that one?

Beryl Satter: mmhmm, I do (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: (laughs) That's, I think everyone knows The Dutchess

Beryl Satter: Everyone knows The Dutchess (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I think it's a Starbucks now or something

Beryl Satter: It-that is right

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Or something, it was

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah. Every time I pass by, I'm look, "Wow, a Starbucks"

Beryl Satter: (laughs). Um, did you hang out at all in- I mean how were you, were you like undercover in Newark and more out in-in the city, or were you, how were you in the c-

Yvonne Hernandez: Undercover in Newark and out in the city, cause you're in the city, you know. Um, but in Newark, we did go to a few places, I don't recall the name but very um...kind of reminds me of those, in the movies in the 50s where the beatniks would go and snap their fingers and listen to poetry in these small cafes.

Beryl Satter: ohhh! What was it called?

Yvonne Hernandez: ugh

Beryl Satter: Sounds cool. D'you remember

Yvonne Hernandez: There were f-

Beryl Satter: where it was?

Yvonne Hernandez: in, on Halsey St

Beryl Satter: It was *on* Halsey!

Yvonne Hernandez: on Halsey St, yeah.

Beryl Satter: Let's see...

Yvonne Hernandez: on Halsey St.

Beryl Satter: We could probably figure out the year, but it was-was it a core[?] place, or?

Yvonne Hernandez: It was, I was 21, so, uh, '78?

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: Around there? And we would go there, and it was so, it was strange because

there were rules. You know like, ok, we're gonna let you ladies have your party here, um, it's-to me it always reminded me of like children, like, "okay you can have your party here, but make sure you don't do this and you don't do that." We couldn't dance. (17:24)

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: we couldn't hold hands

Beryl Satter: do you know who ran the place?

Yvonne Hernandez: no.

Beryl Satter: How did- would they literally *say* you can't dance or hold hands?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, yeah. They- they didn't-they weren't- if they saw this going on, like if they saw you going...they would say, no, you know, sorry. They were really nice about it. No we can't, you know, we can get in trouble for this. How...they cou- I don't understand, they opened the club, but there were rules. It's like the red light district when the red light district started to fade out? I think I was in that era where I was between, you know, and we're- all- we're talking only, just a few years after Stonewall. So it was still, there was still a lot of anger going on, it was, I mean, uh

Beryl Satter: So this was one Newark place where you could go, and i-it-was there certain nights for women or was it always women, or, did women kinda

Yvonne Hernandez: No, we would go-

Beryl Satter: come and take it over something?

Yvonne Hernandez: there were certain nights.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, and that they would, um

Beryl Satter: What was it the other nights? (18:31)

Yvonne Hernandez: We would go on a Saturday night, but mostly we were going uh to New York, on the Saturday night, the- otherwise, on a weekday, it would be around I don't know like a Wednesday or something.

Beryl Satter: That was a

Yvonne Hernandez: I remember

Beryl Satter: women's night in Newark.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah.

Beryl Satter: but, was it, gay men other times or was it...

Yvonne Hernandez: um, there were gay men but not very many. They had their own little place that they went to, so there was-it was mostly women.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. I wish you could-we could figure out, 'cause it sounds like an interesting atmosphere.

Yvonne Hernandez: I can't remember the name, I don't even think this place even had a name, because a lot of it was, um, like, say-I remember there was like a tailor shop, this woman owned a tailor shop, and it was next door to that. And I remember her closing up her tailor shop like really quick when she knew we were coming, like, I don't know...what she thought we were

gonna do to her place

Beryl Satter: (laughs) hmm... um

Yvonne Hernandez: 's on Halsey St.

Beryl Satter: and was it, like, was it mostly Latina lesbians, or was it a mixed,

Yvonne Hernandez: It was mixed,

Beryl Satter: or black, or

Yvonne Hernandez: it-mostly black women

Beryl Satter: Mostly black women

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, yeah

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. And did you have a circle of friends in...

Yvonne Hernandez: I did. I had my friend, oh my god, um, a Brazilian girl, Rosemary. I started dating her after Joyce

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Her name was Rosemary. Her sister Mary worked with me at High Voltage, in the jewelry, accessory... But Rosemary was gay, and she used to always come into the store and just hang out, which I thought was...kinda, why is she- she's not buying anything, she's just hanging out. And uh, after a while, then she asked me out, after Joyce. She moved to Brooklyn, she went to another store, High Voltage opened up another store in Brooklyn

Beryl Satter: uh huh

Yvonne Hernandez: So she went to work in Brooklyn

Beryl Satter: Joyce did?

Yvonne Hernandez: Joyce did,

Beryl Satter: Okay

Yvonne Hernandez: after we broke up, then she just went to Brooklyn. So this girl Rosemary started coming in, um, and then she asked me out. She was very nice. I'm a little possessive type person, and I remember saying, no. Where are you looking? Who are you talking to? You know. And uh...

Beryl Satter: but so, um, was it not hard to-I mean, sounds like High Voltage was like a place to find girls, you know? (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I thought to myself, I just need to stay here,

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: and work, and retire in this place because this is the spot. (21:07) But, her sister told her that I was going out with Joyce. She didn't know, you know, anything about me

Beryl Satter: "She" being...who?

Yvonne Hernandez: Uh, Rose-Rosemary

Beryl Satter: Didn't until her sister told her

Yvonne Hernandez: Until her sister told her, now I know them from high school because we went to high school at the same time

Beryl Satter: Hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Rosemary and her sister are very close in age, like a year apart. So we were all in high school together and when Ro- I didn't know Rosemary was gay either, I had no idea

Beryl Satter: So when you were in high school, you didn't know anybody who was gay, was that right? But it turned

Yvonne Hernandez: No

Beryl Satter: out several of them-

Yvonne Hernandez: except for Danny (laughs)

Beryl Satter: Except for Danny!

Yvonne Hernandez: Daniel

Beryl Satter: Yeah. But it turned out that several people *were*, later, I mean, 'cause you found out later

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, I-there were quite a few. There's this one girl uh she's a friend- her name was a little-oh god, I- she- she's very, to this day she's very in the closet.

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Um but she was a very butchy- when she was in high school, and I thought she was like the cutest thing

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: um, still in the closet

Yvonne Hernandez yeah, she's very, yeah.

Beryl Satter: um...yeah, I guess what- I'm trying to figure out what- you know, what the scene was like for lesbians your age living in Newark, I mean, did you have a s- a small little clique, and you guys

Yvonne Hernandez: We had a

Beryl Satter: hung out?

Yvonne Hernandez: clique, it was a small clique

Beryl Satter: it was very small, huh?

Yvonne Hernandez: It was a small clique. there was uh, it was Marabel, myself, Rosemary, Joyce when she came from Brooklyn she hung out with us also, she started seeing this other girl that lives in Manhattan, so it was about- there were about 6 of us and a couple of guys and we would go to Asbury Park, there was a club in Asbury Park we used to go to, like, you know, like by the beach

Beryl Satter: hmm (22:53)

Yvonne Hernandez: um.

Beryl Satter: um, and did you find each other just sort of through...

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, just kinda gravitated towards each other somehow, we just kinda found each other, I started hanging out with Rosemary, Rosemary already had her group of friends

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: so that's how I got in with them, because I started dating her, so
Beryl Satter: uh huh
Yvonne Hernandez: I started getting in with her crowd
Beryl Satter: yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: and it was a group of about 5 or 6 of us and that's it
Beryl Satter: yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: and we would get in the car, and just go everywhere, down the shore, New York,
Beryl Satter: This is when you're like, early 20s?
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah I was just a kid.
Beryl Satter: (laughs)
Yvonne Hernandez: Just a kid.
Beryl Satter: So um, so you wouldn't really- I mean, so you know, 'cause men often, like, there was some cruising spot, and that- you could see, there were signs and it was, you know, fairly clear, you know
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: and for women, I don't know if it was- I think, it was more like, through personal networks, that you would find people rather than identifying them, you know, I mean Joyce obviously psyched- just psyched you out, I mean
Yvonne Hernandez: she just-
Beryl Satter: she just like watched you for a while
Yvonne Hernandez: She had that vibe going,
Beryl Satter: she knew
Yvonne Hernandez: she had the radar
Beryl Satter: yeah, she
Yvonne Hernandez: gaydar
Beryl Satter: had the great gaydar, yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, she just said, this one here is, uh, trying to
Beryl Satter: she's one of us [?]
Yvonne Hernandez: hide something and I was, I was like, who me?
Beryl Satter: (laughs) (24:11) How were you- did you have, like, long hair or short hair or did you-?
Yvonne Hernandez: I had long hair, very long hair.
Beryl Satter: mmhmm
Yvonne Hernandez: very long without- uh very long hair. They used to- as a matter of fact, they used to call me Rapunzel
Beryl Satter: (laughs)
Yvonne Hernandez: She gave me that name, she used to call me Rapunzel
Beryl Satter: So you didn't, like, because you were-

Yvonne Hernandez: She used to call me Rapunzel, yeah
Beryl Satter: you weren't, like,
Yvonne Hernandez: I forgot about that
Beryl Satter: trying to attract girls by...
Yvonne Hernandez: no
Beryl Satter: how you dressed,
Yvonne Hernandez: mm-mm
Beryl Satter: or anything like
Yvonne Hernandez: mm-mm
Beryl Satter: that,
Yvonne Hernandez: nope
Beryl Satter: you were just.
Yvonne Hernandez: Just, my long hair and my little, you know. And then uh, yeah
Beryl Satter: that's interesting, you know? So like, let's see, I'm trying to- late 70s, so like the feminist movement, was that any kind of influence?
Yvonne Hernandez: oh yeah, yeah. That was um, I never marched in any of that
Beryl Satter: uh huh
Yvonne Hernandez: um, and I- I think mostly it was because I was afraid, you know, I didn't want to do anything to disappoint my mother, or...
Beryl Satter: mmm
Yvonne Hernandez: to embarrass her, or her teacher friends, and oh my god. When I came out to her it was the most...ugh.
Beryl Satter: When was that?
Yvonne Hernandez: When I started seeing- when I was dating Joyce
Beryl Satter: Oh that early? So right away? I mean, first girlfriend
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah,
Beryl Satter: mmhmm
Yvonne Hernandez: mmm, uh she was coming over to the house, with a couple of- other of our friends, which my mother thought, were kinda strange...girls...
Beryl Satter: (laughs)
Yvonne Hernandez: like, "these girls, there's something wrong with these girls." So my mother said to me, "there's something wrong with these girls. You need to stop hanging out with them." You know
Beryl Satter: What do you think she was picking up, you know,
Yvonne Hernandez: she-
Beryl Satter: cause like did you guys, you know, again were you -style wise, were you indistinguishable from... you know, your peers, or was there little things that might have been a little different,
Yvonne Hernandez: ummm

Beryl Satter: or did she just kinda sense the vibe?

Yvonne Hernandez: I think just, her maternal you know, it's like she was trying to- Denial is a wonderful thing, it- it really makes you believe what you want to believe.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: So my mother knew, and so she was telling me, um, you know, "you've gotta stop hanging out with these girls, going to these places, because people are going to start thinking that you're like *them*." And I said to my mom, "well...you know, mom, I am like them." And she froze and she looked at me, she said, like, "come again?" I said, "yeah, I- I'm, I'm, I'm one of those." I said, "yeah, I'm- I'm a lesbian," I used that word. "And Joyce, you know, she's my girlfriend." My mother went...she held her head and she walked out of the room. Then she came back about 10 minute later, she goes, cause she had to let it- she said, "what did you say to me?" I said, "mom, what I said to you, you know, I'm a lesbian, Joyce is my girlfriend." And I remember as I was saying it, I felt all this....no fear, like, it was like a relief, like ahh! You know, and I knew all the things that my mother always said about lesbians, and so my mother said, "Are you trying to tell me that you're one of those women?" And I said, "Yes, mom." And again she walks out of the room, and she comes back, and she said, "You know what?" She said, "I would-" She came, all in my face, I thought she was gonna slap me or something. She said, "I would rather" I mean, nails out, "I would rather you had told me that you were a whore in the street than *that*." And I- now I'm like, okay, now I have to take *this* in. And she walked away, and I'd think, "she'd rather," at the time, there was not the AIDS scare, it was syphilis and gonorrhea, and all of this, and I said, "okay, so she would rather that I have all of that than to be *this*." And I felt really guilty after that, because I remember seeing a picture of my mother in school with the graduation, the kindergarten graduation, and in the picture, my mother looked so sad, in the picture. And I just started crying, I said, "I have to stop doing this. I have to...get a grip on myself, uh, this is a phase." Um, and I actually convinced myself that, yes, this is a phase, I'm just- I got rid of all my friends,

Beryl Satter: oh boy

Yvonne Hernandez: I told Rosemary to go away.

Beryl Satter: By now you were dating Rosemary, and not Joyce?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Okay, wow.

Yvonne Hernandez: And I told her, you know, I said, "I'm killing my mom, and I can't do this," and I just completely got out of the life. *Completely*. I didn't go to any of the gay clubs or *anything*. So, after a couple of years, I stayed by myself, I didn't date anyone. I met this really nice guy, his name was Frank. And my mother liked him. My mother was like, "Oh, he's wonderful" (inaudible) and, right now my mother would have thought anybody was a- any male, anything with anything hanging between his legs will do. Just, just please. So my mother, "he's a really nice guy," so you know, so I started dating him. And he asked me one day, we went to a place, now this place I remember, oddly enough. It was called the Blue Ribbon Inn in Hillside,

cause I like country music. So we went to the Blue Ribbon Inn, it's a country western bar, and we were sitting there, and he said, "you know I heard something about you." I said, "I know what it is, I know what it is." But he said, "I don't care" and that it's fine" you know, "my love." So we wound up getting married

Beryl Satter: oh wow (30:01)

Yvonne Hernandez: I said, okay, this is what I need to do, because all that was a phase, and, so we wound up getting married. Had two children, my son now is 30, and my other son is 29, we had two back to back. But after they were about 5 years old, I just, I left him, I said "I can't do this. I can't sleep in the same room with him, I can't look at him naked, I can't stand the smell of this man." He didn't stink, I mean, he was- his hygiene was beautiful. But, in my psyche, he smelled like a man

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: And I just, you know, he could shampoo his hair, but it doesn't smell like a woman shampoos her hair, you know. And he was a...nice man, you know, they say "the good ones are either gay or married," I always say, he was- he was neither gay nor married, so you know, I wound up leaving him and taking my children and, it was a mess. And I still would not go back to the lifestyle. I, you know, I stayed alone

Beryl Satter: mm

Yvonne Hernandez: with my children. When he would pick them up on weekends, um, I would go into the city, especially to the Village. "Not because the gay people are there, oh no, just because I need to go shopping, and I need to go all the way to New York to go shopping."

(31:37) And I would walk by, and I remember passing by Ruby Fruit, and I say, "you know what, I'm really thirsty, I think I'll go in this bar, so it's a lesbian bar. So what? I'm thirsty. Lesbians drink beer too, they have a right. And I'm going in there, and I'm just gonna have a beer, not because I'm gay, because I'm not, 'cause I gave that up." (laughs) you know? And uh, after a couple of drinks, I'm like, "wow, that one's pretty, that one's pretty. But only because I think she's pretty, not because I have this feeling in me." Yeah it, it was, um, rough and-

Beryl Satter: And you were still, then you were still um- you wouldn't pick anyone up, you would just go back home,

Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm

Beryl Satter: you just kind of...looked and left.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah I just, I- I looked but I-you know, just because I needed to do this. I needed to do this, but in my head, you know, I'm just having a beer.

Beryl Satter: (laughs) What about, um, did you tell your husband why you were leaving?

Yvonne Hernandez: He said to me, I'll never forget what he said to me. He said to me, "Yvonne," he said, "you know what? Another man, I could fight." He said, "This, there are no boxing gloves for this. I can't, I can't fight with this." I said, well you don't have to worry about it being another man anyway (laughs) so, just, that's, ok.

Beryl Satter: So did you guys sort of talk about it without talking about it? Like were, you- I

mean did you, kind of not use the words,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: or did you use the words?

Yvonne Hernandez: well, he had a very good sixth sense, he was very perceptive about everything

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (33:18)

Yvonne Hernandez: and I before I left, I had went to, cause I liked to write a lot. And I wrote- I wrote a story about how I took my children, they were babies, to Independence Park in the Ironbound section in Newark. And I went to the water fountain, my son was thirsty, they were both thirsty, so I took them to the water fountain, and there was this girl standing there and I thought she was with her kids, but it turns out that she worked for the park, and when I went over there, she helped me pick up my son so that he could drink water, and her hand kinda touched my hand, and I just lost it 'cause she was so cute with her little tool belt. So (laughs) I was like, oh my god, this is great, so we were talking for a while, and when I went home that night I was quiet and my husband kept looking at me. And it's almost like he knew that I was feeling something.

Beryl Satter: Was he there? (34:26) When that happened?

Yvonne Hernandez: No

Beryl Satter: No? He wasn't even there. Wow.

Yvonne Hernandez: No, he wasn't it was during the day, he was working. I was with the boys, I was a stay at home mom, I was with the boys. And he just kept looking at me, "You ok? What's the matter?" and I was like, "yeah." And we started- we did- we started seeing each other

Beryl Satter: you and-

Yvonne Hernandez: After I left my husband

Beryl Satter: You and the woman from the park?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: you know, it, uh, it sort of reminds me of the story of the woman who carried you when you were real little, you know? It's something about women and the water and you know it's sort of nice it's (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: 's every- I never thought about that! Maybe I'm a water baby

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: it all happened by water

Beryl Satter: yeah, it's so sweet. So you started- the same woman, you saw her again?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, we just ran into each other. 'Cause I left, and then I found an apartment on Chestnut St in Newark, and I said, well she works at the park so she's gotta be around somewhere

Beryl Satter: So you remembered her, you were like, consciously looking for her

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, yeah.

Beryl Satter: uh huh

Yvonne Hernandez: I just went like, and then when I saw her- She saw me, she was like, "Hey! Hi! Hey!" She was like, "Hey!" And I was like, "Oh, hi!" and we started talking. And she just asking me questions about myself, are those my children, I say, "they're my children." um and we started seeing each other.

Beryl Satter: What was her name? (35:48)

Yvonne Hernandez: Leslie.

Beryl Satter: hmmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Leslie

Beryl Satter: So you were good at meeting women just out and about, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: Just out and about, yeah. Cause I'm just like a m- out and about magnet, I guess

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: um

Beryl Satter: So that was when you, so when you started seeing her, it was like, it had already been a few years, and at this point you were just like, "forget it," I mean, you- when- especially because it was her and she was someone

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: you had

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: had a little flame for

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: much earlier

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: So then

Yvonne Hernandez: that- I-

Beryl Satter: you got back in the life

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, but then I sabotaged that too, I said, no I can't do this. I've got kids that are going to school soon, their friends are gonna make fun of them. Uh so I I just told her that I didn- I didn't want to do this, and not because I didn't love her or anything but because I felt...this is just something that I had to do

Beryl Satter: hmm. How long

Yvonne Hernandez: I had to do it

Beryl Satter: were you together? You two

Yvonne Hernandez: um...eesh, not very long. Eight or nine months

Beryl Satter: mmm, god.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: and, you had gotten the uh, your mother's approval back, by marrying and stuff? Or was she suspecting anything, was she

Yvonne Hernandez: she was happy

Beryl Satter: she was happy again

Yvonne Hernandez: she was happy, she didn't like my husband too much.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I was- started thinking to myself, so maybe she just doesn't like *anybody* that I'm with, I don't know, so it doesn't matter? Um, yeah, they were the typical you- mother in law that you see on TV and comedy skit.

Beryl Satter: um, wow, so you had to

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: you were- again, because the children weren't in school yet and-

Yvonne Hernandez: and they were starting, my one son was starting kindergarten soon, and that was in the summer, and he was starting in September, so I broke it up

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: and then after that, is when my husband started picking them up on weekends and I started going into the city. You know...

Beryl Satter: and how long did that part last

Yvonne Hernandez: oh I did that for the longest time. I just...I went just about every weekend for, like, forever

Beryl Satter: but not, but was this s- like, not going into the clubs, or so barely going in, I mean what- was this that part

Yvonne Hernandez: I would, I would

Beryl Satter: of your life where you-

Yvonne Hernandez: go in

Beryl Satter: You would go in,

Yvonne Hernandez: I would go in but I-

Beryl Satter: but you weren't, you were still like "I'm just doing this I'm still- this isn't me, this isn't me,"

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: kind of

Yvonne Hernandez: well the girls at Ruby Fruit, at- once you go someplace for a while, they start to know you

Beryl Satter: right

Yvonne Hernandez: and they're like, what is with this girl?

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: is she gay, is she straight, is she...what is she doing, is she in the closet? She's just- she confused?" I wasn't confused, I don't think I was. I was in denial

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, I just didn't want to...

Beryl Satter: well how long did that last, did that-

Yvonne Hernandez: um, when my kids graduated from high school

Beryl Satter: ah boy

Yvonne Hernandez: they went away, to school,

Beryl Satter: to college?

Yvonne Hernandez: yes. My son- yeah, they went to, uh, my son likes the arts, photography and everything, so they went to the Institute, the Art Institute of Philadelphia.

Beryl Satter: hm

Yvonne Hernandez: My son still lives there

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: he's married now. He's had three cats. And the other one's married and has my grandson, which is six. They were gone from the house and I was by myself. And I said, I'm going to go on a trip. Where am I going to go. Somebody told me Sanibel, Florida is really nice. And I said, ok, got tickets, off to Sanibel, Florida I go. And I'm at the beach in Sanibel, Florida, I'll never forget I had on this flowery bathing suit with wrap around, sitting on my chair, and an umbrella, and I'm just like, that song, "Watching all the girls go by." And I'm watching the girls go by, and I'm watching the girls go by, and all of the sudden I say to myself, "Oh my god. I'm a flaming lesbian"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: It's just like this bolt just fell out of the sky and said, "Hey, stupid! That's what I've been trying to tell you for the longest time." I'm like, I'm just a flaming homosexual

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: and I just got up and I was like, (gasps), and I stood there and people are looking at me like, "Is she ok?" And I...stood there and I looked at the water, and I just put all my shit back in a bag and I'm carrying, I s-there was an umbrella, I was gonna take the umbrella. And I had-said, "Why am I taking this umbrella, I rented it anyway, leave the umbrella there, leave the chair, take your stuff." So I go to the counter at the hotel I was staying, I said "I need your help," I said to the guy behind the, and he says, "yes, can I help you?" I said, "I need a bar to go to." and he said, "oh, well, we have one in the hotel." And I said, "no, no, no, no, no. I'm looking for a big ol' homosexual gay bar."

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: and he said, "Well I don't know of any but we do have somebody here who might know," he says, "Why don't you come back this time," I said, ok. I go upstairs, I shower, I said, I'm gonna go back downstairs and look for whatever the guy's name was. So I go downstairs, I- I don't know, let's say the guy's name was John. I said, "Ok is John here?" And here comes John. "Can I help you?" I said, "John I'm looking for a big ol' flaming lesbian bar." And he goes, "Oh girl, let me tell you, you got-you have to take a cab." And he told me where to go, this place called La Florita. Um in Sanibel Florida. So I went to La Florita, and I put on my big ol' lesbian happy attitude. (laughs) And I had a great time. And I met a couple of people there, and we danced, and we had a great time. I had three more days left, so then I was there and for the three days, I just hung out with these girls. You know, "Oh we're gonna have lunch

tomorrow, come join us." And I kept in touch with them for a while too, that was....oh, it was about thirteen- uh well my son was 18, it was about 13 years ago

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (42:16)

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: hmm. That's grea-that's w-

Yvonne Hernandez: and ever since, I have been, like, just get out of my way, I- I'm, no. No more of this...stuff. No more of this denial stuff. Now I go into Ruby F-or, what, no, Ruby Fruit isn't there anymore. When I started going into Ruby Fruit it was because I knew why I was going in there, I wasn't hiding anything.

Beryl Satter: hmm. So what was it like to come back to Newark uh, you know, with this new attitude?

Yvonne Hernandez: um, when I came back from Sanibel, Florida, I looked up, I was living in West Milford, NJ. And I looked up I went online, I remember the computer was a big box looking compu-big box looking computer. I went home on my computer and I looked up just gay stuff going around town, what's going on. And there was a place in Morristown, NJ. Oh god if I can remember that place. I think they're still around. It's in Morristown, NJ, and they meet once a week, it's like a support group, the women meet in one room, the men meet in the other, and afterwards, everybody gets together for coffee. And uh that's where I met um my ex, we were together for a few years. Until her ex girlfriend came in the scene and she decided that she was going to start dating her ex-girlfriend while she was living with me. (43:51) But we do the lesbian thing, we're still friends

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: (laughs) we're still friends.

Beryl Satter: yeah. Um, I'm try-So, what do you do? I lost your, um, professional life after High Voltage, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: oh. Well after I got married I just-I stayed home, I stayed home and take care of my kids. I started studying court reporting, you know the little machine that you just- the little people tell, little... I started to study that but it was so expensive, and I- it was just crazy. Right now I just, I take care of children, is what I do. I- work sometimes with Montessori School, or, I just, will take care of someone's child and it pays really good

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: um...I do a-

Beryl Satter: Like your mom, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, I do wanna to back to school, but I'm like, oh god I don't know if I wanna do that, just finished paying the student loan, I don't want to do this again

Beryl Satter: mmm. Um, so, and that, like, having the queer life and doing that is, it's just two separate things, it's ok, or-

Yvonne Hernandez: I keep them separate. Because I take care of children, I have this fear, that someone is gonna say, "I don't want her taking care of my child. I don't want her taking care of

my daughter"

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (45:10)

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, um. Because even though it's 2014, people have that...that fear, and the kids love me the best! (laughs)

Beryl Satter: hmmm um, wow. Is your mom still around?

Yvonne Hernandez: No, she died 6 years ago.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. Did she ever know that you went back?

YJ: Yeah. And she died on her death bed just as annoyed and pissed off as she was the day I came out to her. But she did say to me, she said, oh my god, she goes, "I'm gonna be dead and buried and you're still gonna be...like this." So, she did say, "Why did I even get a headache over this, 'cause I could ask you ask a favor to not do this after I'm gone." And I said, "Well don't ask, because you're not gonna get-

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: it's not happening, and don't try to give me that Puerto Rican 'I'll come back and pull your legs' crap. It's not gonna work"

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: um

Beryl Satter: So it sounds like you kinda got a little, like, I don't know. More open with each other a little bit towards the end where she could say what she thought and you could say what you thought and

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, well she met my ex-girlfriend. We were together for a few years. She met her, and she liked her a lot.

Beryl Satter: hmmm!

Yvonne Hernandez: She liked my girlfriend a lot

Beryl Satter: The one you met in the support group

Yvonne Hernandez: Yes. Yeah, we- we lived together, we had a life together, I mean our bank accounts were joint and everything was just like, you know. Um, and my mother loved her

Beryl Satter: hmmm.

Yvonne Hernandez: My mother loved her, as a matter- my ex girlfriend, she still talks about this denim shirt that my mother gave her. She said, "I still have that denim shirt your mother gave me," Uh yeah, ok.

Beryl Satter: Now how do you make sense of that? You know? She just, she could like the people but she had to put down the, the concept or something?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, my

Beryl Satter: you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: mother was a strange puppy.

Beryl Satter: (laughs) (47:10) um, where did- you mother, was she born in Newark too or did she move t-

Yvonne Hernandez: She was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico.

Beryl Satter: Ok that was your mother. And your father?

Yvonne Hernandez: He was born in Villalba

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: uh Puerto Rico

Beryl Satter: And when did they come here to Newark?

Yvonne Hernandez: My mother came here when she was 18, right after she graduated from high school.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: My father, I don't know much about him

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: My mother never really talked about him

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: He was a jerk anyway. He really was. I was so glad

Beryl Satter: Is that what you heard?

Yvonne Hernandez: when he died.

Beryl Satter: Oh you even remembered?

Yvonne Hernandez: Oh I remember, he was just awful. I remember just being so glad. I remember sitting in the funeral parlor my brother saying, "he's not in the casket anymore," and I was like, what?" I ran and I looked. I said, "He's still there, what are you talking about?" He said, "well, his soul is gone." I'm like, "gone where?" He said "well he goes to heaven" And I remember at 6 years old thinking, "well if he's somewhere it's not in heaven."

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: The man was awful.

Beryl Satter: hmm.

Yvonne Hernandez: Terrible abuser, he broke my mother's collarbone, he was just a terrible, terrible man. He and...ugh, he was just horrible. So it was nice that he, you know, I never missed him ever in my life. Not even once.

Beryl Satter: hmmm Yeah and your mom, you know, I guess she...tolerated-

Yvonne Hernandez: I think she was glad that he died

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: too.

Beryl Satter: Do you know how he died?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, he was um. It was a homicide. He was in a bar, and he was a gambler, and he used to place numbers, bets, and.... he was coming out of a bar on Thomas St on the corner of Thomas and Broad St, I think it was called, um, I think it was called Thomas Bar 'cause it's a coincidence that the street is Thomas and the owner was Thomas. And according to the- well I have the- I have the report, and I have his- actually I have his death certificate, I have everything. He was uh they asked him to come outside and they put him in this car and they shot him and killed him. Shot him through the neck, his heart and his lung were perforated.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: And then they just threw him off of uh exit 15 on the turnpike. Threw his body out- out there some- at the time, the turnpike was a lot more desolate.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: You know? Didn't have as many-

Beryl Satter: hmm. So it was some gang kind of thing, it sounds

Yvonne Hernandez: mmmhmm

Beryl Satter: like, you

Yvonne Hernandez: mmmhmm

Beryl Satter: know? It's- 'cause he

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: was involved with gambling and they just

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: decided..

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah. But he was he was always dressed to the T, nice shoes, I remember going shopping with him, he always had to buy like the best shoes and the best suits, he was always getting his nails done, his hair was always nice. He always looked good

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: um, I guess it's uh like a white-collar criminal or something? I don't know.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: um. Yeah

Beryl Satter: hmm. So- yeah, so your mother must've been pretty young

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, when my mother had me when she was 30.

Beryl Satter: Oh so she wasn't so young

Yvonne Hernandez: So she was about 36

Beryl Satter: Oh, I- she wasn't so young.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Okay.

Yvonne Hernandez: She was about 36. Yeah she was pretty up in her 40s by the time she had my brother and my sister.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (50:27) hmm...um, so, 36 when she had you.

Yvonne Hernandez: No she was 30 when she had me

Beryl Satter: Oh, wait. Oh and 36 when he died.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: So she put up with him for a while.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, she sure did.

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I don't know how she did it

Beryl Satter: yeah, but-

Yvonne Hernandez: Guess she had to-

Beryl Satter: the-

Yvonne Hernandez: Had to that's what it was back then I-

Beryl Satter: yeah, yeah, you know, but it's always funny that, you know with these really rough heterosexual relations but still the worst thing you could do was not be in one, you know?

(laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: Right! (laughs)

Beryl Satter: you're like, wait a second. (laughs) what's so great, you know? But um, yeah wow. Um, so did you think, I mean, something was like- was there a Puerto Rican gay scene that was separate from a black gay scene or- and a white gay scene, or were they

Yvonne Hernandez: when I

Beryl Satter: kind of mixed?

Yvonne Hernandez: came out?

Beryl Satter: Yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: No it was all, pretty much,

Beryl Satter: 's all mixed?

Yvonne Hernandez: it was all mixed, yeah.

Beryl Satter: yeah. What about today, in Newark? I w- yeah, so

Yvonne Hernandez: um...In Newark?

Beryl Satter: You live in Newark still?

Yvonne Hernandez: I live in Newark, but there is- I don't think, anyway, I don't think there's anything going on in Newark that's- um, there- the- the girls at LIT, the Liberation in Truth Church? Um, that's a gay church? I know the girls there, I know Jae and Burley, they own- um, four of the girls from the church own the collective, which is on Halsey St. You know the collective, right?

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. Artisan- Artisan Collective?

Yvonne Hernandez: Artisan Collective, yes. I've known those girls since I moved back to Newark, I've known them for like 10 years now. (52:05) Great group of girls. Um, yeah Jae the

Beryl Satter: How did you meet

Yvonne Hernandez: minister

Beryl Satter: everybody?

Yvonne Hernandez: I went to the church, I wanted a church to go to, and, it's so weird cause my mom was alive at the time and I was looking for a church, but I wanted a church that was gay friendly. And I couldn't find one, and my mother said to me, "well don't worry about it. real- you'll find one" and I s-

Beryl Satter: your mother said that to you?

Yvonne Hernandez: My mother said that to me.

Beryl Satter: (laughs) "Don't worry you'll find a gay church?"

Yvonne Hernandez: well, um, I didn't tell her I was looking for a gay

Beryl Satter: oh

Yvonne Hernandez: church

Beryl Satter: oh, oh, you said

Yvonne Hernandez: I said I'm looking for *a* church

Beryl Satter: looking for a ch-

Yvonne Hernandez: but that I can't find the right church

Beryl Satter: oh, oh got it. I'm so- Alright, that makes sense.

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm playing with words with her

Beryl Satter: Alright, I see

Yvonne Hernandez: I said, you know, 'cause with my mother you can't say gay stuff.

Beryl Satter: Right, I was thinking, wait

Yvonne Hernandez: So I said- I'm looking for a church that I feel comfortable with

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: trying to give her a little. So my mother said to me, she said, "well don't worry you know something it'll- it'll show up." And I said, "Mom, it's not like a church is gonna fall from the sky and land in front of me." And she said to me, "You never know."

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: So I said, ok. And I was driving one day down Broad St the Church is over there by the YMCA. And I had the red light, and I stopped at the red light.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: All of the sudden I looked to the right and there's a church, and all these women are coming out of the church. And, you know by looking at them these are- these women are gay. And I said, I'll be damned if my mother wasn't right. A church just landed in front of me. It just landed. And I'm so busy looking at these girls coming out of this church, the guy behind me is honking the horn 'cause now the light turned green, and I took off. And the next week I came back around the time I said, "let me look at the time, okay" it was like, say it was around 3 o'clock or something, I said, "so I'll come back next week around 1. To ask." And I came back, and they said, "well service is gonna start in a little while." And I went in, and that's how I met- you know, all the girls, I met Jae and Burley and just- all of them, nice- nice group of women.

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: And we still- I still get together with them. Because I'm an actress, and I do open mic, I read poetry, I-you know, I write my own stuff. I actually have- I have a book that's just been published.

Beryl Satter: huh!

Yvonne Hernandez: And it still, I'm still looking at it 'cause I still have some corrections, I'm going "I don't like this, don't like this." But the book has been-

Beryl Satter: What's it called?

(noise)

Beryl Satter: You got it, huh?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Ooh, let's see!

Yvonne Hernandez: Queer monologues

Beryl Satter: oh cool! That's fabulous. A nice picture!

Yvonne Hernandez: Thank you, different stories, uh these are stories that people have told me, um, and I just write their stories down,

Beryl Satter: uh-huh

Yvonne Hernandez: there's- I have a ton of them.

Beryl Satter: uh-huh

Yvonne Hernandez: And a girlfriend of mine said to me, I have a book that I'm writing about my mother's life. And I said- she said, Don't send- She said, Take the book and send it to- Just take a few of your things and, because you might not like them, and I don't- there's so many typos in here, it's just terrible. So, uh, just things like- for exam- like the table of contents are crooked

Beryl Satter: Yeah you've gotta really yeah be on this. But no what, usually these are things that

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: um, you notice it and nobody else

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: you know? But that's okay. (55:27) But this is cool, um,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Because you know we're doing the Sanctuary Project about Queer Newark clubs- and part of the- they want to do, a kind of open mic reading thing?

Yvonne Hernandez: mmm

Beryl Satter: So maybe you could be part of it? If you're interested

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: If you want to read, and we kind of wanted stuff that had some gay theme and Newark theme, but- so I don't know if any of these do. Do any of them? Or are they mostly kind of not quite in Newark, or?

Yvonne Hernandez: No, they're just um, they're just stories that people always tell me these stories, um, and I just-

Beryl Satter: They're other people's stories, mostly

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, some of them are mine. And I tell people, "well I'm not gonna tell you which ones are mine."

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: Some of them are, and a lot of them aren't, I mean I have tons of them but I just put this little book together, just to get my, what's that expression? Wet your whistle?

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: Now I know what to do and what not to do from this-

Beryl Satter: yeah! Who's

Yvonne Hernandez: from this book

Beryl Satter: who- your Uncle Chico, is he uh?

Yvonne Hernandez: Oh yeah, he um, yeah, he's the best. He always made sure when I was growing up that, because of him I learned how to ice-skate, he always took us ice-skating, I was up- with the YMCA for years, I took ballet and jazz dancing and I love classical music because of him. He always used to- "Oh god, you're gonna take us to see *The Nutcracker* again?"

Beryl Satter: (laughs) (56:23)

Yvonne Hernandez: But he instilled this in us, so now I *love* like, just like to go up to the Met and listen to opera and just listen to classical music. People are like, "Are you listening to classical music again? This is boring," and I was like, "boring to you 'cause you don't like it. I love it."

Beryl Satter: (laughs) That your mother's brother? (57:11)

Yvonne Hernandez: no, she- he's an uncle by marriage.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: so he's...

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: your mother's sister's husband?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: and when the whole gay stuff came up, did he ever know?

Yvonne Hernandez: He knew but he didn't care. He never asked me. He know-

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: He knew my girlfriend and he never showed any, like I never felt anything from him like, "Oh my god," you know.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: unlike your mother, who- well your mother was more like, uh, (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: she was impossible, she was just awful

Beryl Satter: She pushed, she pushed it.

Yvonne Hernandez: Ugh

Beryl Satter: Yeah.

Yvonne Hernandez: She just had this image, of...of these people live in this world, and they just, I don't understand. I, 'til this day I can't figure out, ugh, she probably died thinking the same way, thinking what I'm thinking, "I just can't figure this girl out, I just don't know"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: So... mmhmm

Beryl Satter: Do you think um, you know, it was cultural stuff, at play too, like between Puerto Rican, Catholic, immigrant kind of, you know, I mean they're- not- they're people not born in this count- you know that- in the mainland, they're born in the territory and, you know, a- the island, you know, maybe there's a different culture?

Yvonne Hernandez: My mother, I think she just felt that I like, she was cursed somehow, or, what did she do wrong?

Beryl Satter: oh that's-

Yvonne Hernandez: Why is this happening to me?

Beryl Satter: a lot of people feel that way. Yeah so it wasn't about her religion

Yvonne Hernandez: it was her fault, as far as, she always felt it was her fault. She did something

Beryl Satter: Okay

Yvonne Hernandez: "maybe I shouldn't have punished you by taking away your doll"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, maybe

Beryl Satter: silly stuff.

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm sure she went through a million things in her head

Beryl Satter: yeah.

Yvonne Hernandez: But she blamed herself.

Beryl Satter: uh-huh

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah she blamed herself (59:06) you know

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: so

Beryl Satter: And you said that, um, you know as a kid you, did you ever see a gay person harassed, or you just heard about it?

Yvonne Hernandez: I always just heard about it, read about it

Beryl Satter: And your mom talked maybe

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah my mom would talk about it. Except for the- except for the one, I used to hear people say to the one- the one gay guy, I don't remember his name

Beryl Satter: that old- the older guy?

Yvonne Hernandez: The older guy, yeah. I used- I remember hearing people hollering things at him

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: and he just kept walking down the street and- and ignored it. I never saw him physically get hurt or anything like that. I myself, even walking down the Village, I experienced a lot of negative- when I was walking with Rosemary one time, this woman came out of her house and we were holding hands and we were walking and she goes, "Oh that's so disgusting." And I remember thinking, we're in the Village! Not far from Stonewall, and this is disgusting to this woman. Why are you here? Move.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: Or, you know, do something. Yeah. (1:00:12)

Beryl Satter: So for- well that would be, to see this neighborhood guy who's pretty out and hear

Yvonne Hernandez: ugh

Beryl Satter: him be yelled at

Yvonne Hernandez: he always had

Beryl Satter: on the street

Yvonne Hernandez: a pocketbook, and he walked with- swished when he walked, very feminine man. And he didn't care! Would put his hair up and, I mean, he would, oh his- I remember his eyebrows always being, you know, plucked. And my mother liked him though

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: My mother thought he was just so fantastic, "Well he's just such a nice guy" yeah but not- but not her daughter. It's, gay is good for other people, you know, not for her- not for her child.

Beryl Satter: So let's see, I'm trying to picture this, it must've been, like, early sev- no- no wait, in the 60s, that this guy was

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, in the 60s.

Beryl Satter: was

Yvonne Hernandez: In the 60s

Beryl Satter: out there with his boyfriend,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: flaming on the streets and he's in the Ironbound

Yvonne Hernandez: Yes. In the Ironbound on Gobel St.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: when we lived on Gobel St., yeah

Beryl Satter: uh-huh

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah (1:01:07)

Beryl Satter: He was like, was a neighbor right up the street?

Yvonne Hernandez: Ye- I don't remember where he lived

Beryl Satter: But, I mean you saw

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: him around

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: on the, he was

Yvonne Hernandez: I remember seeing him

Beryl Satter: obviously

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: a neighbor,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: or you wouldn't-

Yvonne Hernandez: 'Cause I would see him

Beryl Satter: you wouldn't see him

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, I'd see him in the supermarkets or, you know, and, he would go to the bar on the corner of South and Herman Streets, it was I don't remember the- it, later on, it

was called La Perla. I don't remember what it was called before that. And there was nothing there but street people. And he didn't care, he was just, he wanted a beer, he went in there and he just sat himself down with his- I remember seeing him going in there and thinking, "This guy's got a lot of nerve." Really, he- but, since everybody in the neighborhood knew him, it was like, he was like the neighborhood fag, you know? That's the way they looked at him, "He's the neighborhood fag, so just leave him alone and let him have his beer and don't bother him." If he would've go to into a neighborhood where nobody knew him then he would probably have a problem. But since everybody knew him, you know,

Beryl Satter: did-

Yvonne Hernandez: they just left him alone. So, but

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: I do remember hearing people, in- joking, the people norm- always, like, joke about it.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:02:22)

Yvonne Hernandez: So.

Beryl Satter: Yeah that's tough for a little gay girl, you know, or kid, to be

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: hearing

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: you know, kind of nasty stuff

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: said about

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: som-

Yvonne Hernandez: and when I was like in my early 20s I still lived in the old neighborhood so all my high school friends were still...around. That was really hard for me. That was tough, because now the talk of the neighborhood is, "Did you hear Yvonne turned lesbian?" I didn't turn anything, you know? I can turn my hair blonde

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: you know? um

Beryl Satter: so this he- this was when you were like, 19, 20, 21

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, when I s-

Beryl Satter: when you were dating Joyce

Yvonne Hernandez: when I started seeing Joyce

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: Because I was very...you know, at that time, before I got scared and got married and everything, I was- just- I didn't care. We walked down the street, and

Beryl Satter: You'd hold hands on the street and stuff?

Yvonne Hernandez: No, we didn't do that. We didn't do that. Not that I remember, not that I

recall, I don't recall doing that.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. But you were, you'd- som-

Yvonne Hernandez: we did-

Beryl Satter: enough just

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: walking on the street together

Yvonne Hernandez: they saw-

Beryl Satter: that people noticed

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, and I didn't care and...I had friends that just stopped, and people that I grew up with, and they didn't want to- they did not want to talk to me, or I could feel that they were like, "Ok, we've gotta go now."

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, and these were people that I- I grew up with, you know? That I, you know, we went to school together, or we walked to school together, we, you know

Beryl Satter: They're all

Yvonne Hernandez: we're all the s-

Beryl Satter: Ironbound people? I mean, was there a difference

Yvonne Hernandez: Every s-

Beryl Satter: like a real close neighborhood thing? 'Cause, the Ironbound is sort of just the way it- it's bound

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: you know,

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, yeah

Beryl Satter: I always wondered if it's like its own world, and-?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah it is, it's like...mm..yeah. I think so.

Beryl Satter: So in that close world of the Ironbound

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: That's where these people are being...cold now.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah.

Beryl Satter: And you're still living there.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, and I'm still living there (1:04:32)

Beryl Satter: Are you still living there?

Yvonne Hernandez: Not

Beryl Satter: no-

Yvonne Hernandez: in that-

Beryl Satter: no-

Yvonne Hernandez: well I live in the Ironbound now

Beryl Satter: You do?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: But in a different, slightly-

Yvonne Hernandez: I moved back. But not in that section. I live, I live in the Ironbound, but nowhere near uh I live right on Pacific and Warwick St., which is nowhere near where I grew

Beryl Satter: uh-huh

Yvonne Hernandez: up.

Beryl Satter: Were you like, just, "well forget them, you know, I'm doing what I want," were you-

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, I was, but then at the same time it- I was hurt, and I was- and even though I was like, I didn't care, they made me feel ashamed of myself

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: you know? I felt really, I felt really ashamed of myself, I didn't want to....um

Beryl Satter: I mean that's, yeah, it's bad, I mean it's-

Yvonne Hernandez: They

Beryl Satter: I guess-

Yvonne Hernandez: were really just, you know, and the girls were like, "we don't even want to hang out with you," when it, like, "Why, don't flatter yourself." You know,

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: just because I'm a lesbian doesn't mean that I like every woman I see, does a straight man like every woman he sees? No, you know I'm just as picky as anybody

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: else, you know? But they were awful, ugh

Beryl Satter: Do you think that was part of, that, between that and your mother, it- once you got married, did they let up? Did everyone go,

Yvonne Hernandez: When I got married

Beryl Satter: "Oh, no, she's married"

Yvonne Hernandez: I moved, I still lived in the Ironbound, I moved farther to a place called Six Corners and I didn't know anyone there.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I moved away from- from the area that I lived in. But they were really bad. My brother has a friend of his that they've been friends since they were in- since they were children, and when his friend got engaged, he found his girlfriend, she was the worst, she was horrible. Oh my god, she was talking awful about me, oh it was just awful, but I just ignored it, I never confronted her about it. 'Cause I'm not- I'm not confrontational like that, like, "Oh you're talking about me!" I don't do that. Never did. Um, so now that we're grown, we're adults, sh- you know, and since he's still a close friend of my brother's I still see her every once in a while. But she is just like the coolest person now.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: She never apologized,

Beryl Satter: huh.

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, she's like, really nice to me now every time she sees me, she's like, "oh Yvonne!" she gives big old hug and kiss, and like, like nothing ever happened. And this- I look at it as, it's in the past, we were kids. You know, and her actions tells me, "I'm sorry."

Beryl Satter: mmhmm, yeah, that's

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: true, the actions-

Yvonne Hernandez: So, I like that, and I appreciate that in her, you know? (1:07:23) And I don't give her, you know, shade or treat her like, "oh well you treated me like this once, so I'm gonna treat-" No, it's done. You know, we were kids. So.

Beryl Satter: But it sounds like it's- was not easy to be a gay- you know, an out gay person or even a quiet gay person

Yvonne Hernandez: No, in Newark it- I used to- it was hard. It was hard because I, anywhere we went, Joyce was you know butchy looking, and I got to the point where I got sick of my long hair, I cut all my hair off, I cut, hair was short

Beryl Satter: When did you cut your hair?

Yvonne Hernandez: oh god, I was about, I was, maybe, right after I started dating Joyce, actually. Um, I just said, "I came out to my mother, I'm free!" I always wanted short hair, I never, you know, 'cause you're Spanish people, the hair, the girl, oooh, and I never wanted it, I remember envying my brother 'cause he could sit in the barber's seat and I couldn't, and "Mom, when can I sit in the barber seat" she was like, "What are you crazy, you can't sit in the barber seat." So I had cut my- you know, I cut all my hair off and...anywhere I went in Newark, it was ho- it was rough. You know? People always had something horrible to say, and they said things, like, "dyke" and "butch" and, not that- I mean- I don't, "butch" is not a bad word but when you throw it at someone with mal intent, then it's a bad word. They were just awful, I've been spit at, I've had water thrown at me as a ch- as a young girl. These things

Beryl Satter: How y-

Yvonne Hernandez: don't happen now

Beryl Satter: When you, as a young girl, how young?

Yvonne Hernandez: Young girl, like

Beryl Satter: 19?

Yvonne Hernandez: 19, 20, 21, when I started seeing- when I started dating Joyce. You know. Just I mean for someone to actually come out of their house with a bucket of water, it's like, I'm thinking, do you know that I pass by here every day, and then one day it's like premeditated, like "Okay, I'm gonna fill this water up so when she comes by, I'm gonna thr-" And I've had, you know, I was lucky the water was cold anyway

Beryl Satter: So, what was it, a man or a woman, or was somebody-

Yvonne Hernandez: It was a woman

Beryl Satter: It was a woman?

Yvonne Hernandez: It was a woman

Beryl Satter: That some random- I mean did she-

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: did-

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: was she standing outside with-

Yvonne Hernandez: It was on, it was actually, you know where Clay St is in Newark? Clay St, where the 7th Avenue projects are. Broad St. Right where it starts to turn into Bloomfield Avenue in that a- in that area

Beryl Satter: Okay, yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: But on Broad St

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: There's a bridal shop there used to be called Vicky's Bridal Shop, and the woman lived upstairs or next door. And I used to pass by there every day, 'cause I used to work at the bridal shop, I used to work at Vicky's Bridal Shop

Beryl Satter: Oh really?

Yvonne Hernandez: Vicky's Bridal

Beryl Satter: Was that after

Yvonne Hernandez: Shop

Beryl Satter: High Voltage?

Yvonne Hernandez: After, no, I used to work in High Voltage, but the lady, Vicky, she knew my mother. And she needed help, so High Voltage, I only worked from Monday to Friday, so I would go on Saturdays and work with Vicky, 'cause my mother said, you know, "she's a friend, you go help her out"

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:10:45)

Yvonne Hernandez: And this lad- and I- Joyce would go with me sometimes, Vicky didn't care, Vicky owned the bridal shop and Vicky just didn't give two hootenannies about anything. She was a very cool lady, Cuban lady, she didn't speak English, she didn't care. And this lady used to see me and Joyce all the time, and- she was always saying something or giving us dirty looks, to the point where eventually I stopped working there

Beryl Satter: huh, she drove you out of the

Yvonne Hernandez: I stopped

Beryl Satter: job.

Yvonne Hernandez: working there, yeah.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah. I said 'cause this lady, I don't know, ok it's water today, what's tomorrow, an axe? So I don't want to play toughie and you know, rather just leave.

Beryl Satter: So, yes. So, that's- it's a sad story

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, Vicky's Bridal Shop, yeah

Beryl Satter: Yeah, I mean of all places,

Yvonne Hernandez: (inaudible)

Beryl Satter: you know,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: a bridal shop,

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: that like, okay.

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah

Beryl Satter: Um, 'cause you'd help people like buy their bridal gowns

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, they'd come in, and they'd just you know, I would just- Some people want used- she had a lot of used bridal dresses, so I would take the dress, you know, and show them. "Oh I wanna see that one." I'd put it on- I'd take it out, and there were some people that said, "Could you try it on and model it for me?" And I'd be like, "Sure, whatever"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: And I would put it on and- that- I sold quite a few dresses too.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, and I helped her make dresses, I remember putting- helping her put the pearls on the dress, she made all her- she made a lot of the dress, she was very good, uh, you know. And you get your pocketbooks, you get your shoes, you get your accessories all in the same place

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: It's still a bridal shop, but it's not Vicky's Bridal Shop anymore.

Beryl Satter: huh. Wow, it's still there

Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm

Beryl Satter: um, yeah, so there you were with your short hair and your girlfriend and you're working in the bridal shop, and that one woman, and she lived, what, next door or something?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, u- she lived above, now

Beryl Satter: She lived above the bridal shop

Yvonne Hernandez: She s- She s- She said to Vicky, you know, you have these brides coming in here, and you have these girls, and Vicky s- I remember Vicky saying to her, "Yeah but that's a..." you know, I mean, she had this, "there goes the neighborhood" attitude, like

Beryl Satter: About you guys?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, like,

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: like, you know, we had this big gay van and we're gonna bring all these gay people in, and, "No, we don't recruit. You know, I'm just working" you know

Beryl Satter: (laughs) And I'm sorry to keep asking 'bout it, but it's just such a crazy story and, you know,

Yvonne Hernandez: (inaudible)

Beryl Satter: in big part because the bridal thing, I mean it's
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: just, you know,
Yvonne Hernandez: It was- It
Beryl Satter: oh man.
Yvonne Hernandez: was crazy, and there was this lady, I'll never forget, she wa- she was wearing a light blue um kinda like a um, you know those robes that have all the flowers on them and the Judge Judy collar?
Beryl Satter: like a muumuu kind of thing?
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: like Hawaiian
Yvonne Hernandez: sh- it was
Beryl Satter: muumuu kind of thing?
Yvonne Hernandez: a- it was a light blue, and she had her hair up in a scarf, sometimes she wore rollers, and she was not a ben- she was not nice at all. She lived upstairs
Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:13:36) And she threw water at
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: you like, from upstairs?
Yvonne Hernandez: No she wen- from downstairs. She was- she came down the stairs, and she said something about getting too close to the house, or something, and I'm like, "Yeah but we- I work here," you know, and she said something like, "I don't care, I don't want you near the doorway," or something. 'Cause it was the bridal shop and then there was the door that goes up to the second floor, and she didn't want me anywhere near the door. I don't know why, it- just- she-made her uncomfortable, I don't know
Beryl Satter: well, she's-
Yvonne Hernandez: So I got too close to the door, and she came downstairs with- but she already *had* it in her hand when she opened the door, you know? So,
Beryl Satter: sh-
Yvonne Hernandez: it couldn't have been, you know
Beryl Satter: That's- and then you have to like go to work, like, wet?
Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, well, Vicky Guerra [sp?] came out and argued with her a little bit, and I left because I mean she was just opening up and I left because I thought to myself, "This isn't good for her business." Her customers don't need to see this, you know? These women are coming here, they're en- they're happy, they're getting married, they don't need to see this. And I felt like I was gonna jeopardize her business or you know, that was part of it. And then the biggest part was because, I- you know, scared, I
Beryl Satter: Yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: I didn-
Beryl Satter: she scared-

Yvonne Hernandez: I didn't know-

Beryl Satter: she- she terrorized you out of there,

Yvonne Hernandez: You know, I

Beryl Satter: basically

Yvonne Hernandez: mean, the water could- I mean, it was water, it could have been hot water, it could've been boiling water, it could have had some clorox in it, but you know, lucky for me, it was just a- plain, cold water. But I don't know what would trigger this lady later on

Beryl Satter: so you didn't go back

Yvonne Hernandez: so

Beryl Satter: that was it, you left the...

(speaking at once)

Beryl Satter: you left the job

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, I left, yeah, I left. I mean, I would go back and visit her still 'cause she was my- of- a friend of my mother's

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:15:26)

Yvonne Hernandez: And she's a very nice lady

Beryl Satter: You wonder if *that* got around. You know, what this woman did, you know, 'cause they all knew about you, so did they know about her? You know what I mean?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah. But. it- like, if that would've happened today, I think, it would be

Beryl Satter: it would be a bigger deal

Yvonne Hernandez: "oh my god! are-" you know,

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: there would be people throwing stones at her windows and- and everything, but back then it was, it was um, "well, if you're gonna live that lifestyle, then you have to be prepared for..." And I believed that, at the time. "Well, you know, I caused it myself, because this is how I'm living, and um, if I don't want this to happen to me anymore, then maybe I should just do the straight thing." Which eventually is what I wound up doing

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:16:14)

Yvonne Hernandez: you know?

Beryl Satter: yeah. It's cool that Vicky came, you know d-

Yvonne Hernandez: Vicky was nice

Beryl Satter: Vicky was nice,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: and Vicky was on your side

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, she didn't care.

Beryl Satter: yeah. (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: She didn't give a-

Beryl Satter: she thin- she prob- you know, you're a good saleswoman, you were doing

Yvonne Hernandez: just sell the

Beryl Satter: good in there.
Yvonne Hernandez: clothes and help me sew, and
Beryl Satter: yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: go home to your mother, you know?
Beryl Satter: yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: you'll be fine, you know
Beryl Satter: yeah. That's- yeah, that would- you know, 'cause we hear like stories that it was tough in Newark, it was tough in Newark, you know?
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: but we don't get, like, specifics, so, this
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: it's just- it's a- it's a tough story, but it helps like give a sense of what it might've meant,
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: you know, just to walk down the street,
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah
Beryl Satter: I mean
Yvonne Hernandez: I wish I could just remember some of the names of the places on Halsey St.
Beryl Satter: uh-huh
Yvonne Hernandez: You know how Halsey St has, you
Beryl Satter: uh-huh, yeah you go down
Yvonne Hernandez: go downstairs. I remember going down into uh Hahne & co., like across the street from Hane & co., um, yeah.
Beryl Satter: And when there was, I mean, I could give you names of some places. There was a place called, of course, there was Murphy's
Yvonne Hernandez: I used to go to Murphy's (1:17:13) Yeah
Beryl Satter: (laughs)
Yvonne Hernandez: oh my god that was- Murphy's was the first place I went to
Beryl Satter: oh yeah? what was that
Yvonne Hernandez: I mean tha-
Beryl Satter: like?
Yvonne Hernandez: I mean, the first place in Newark that I went to
Beryl Satter: uh-huh. Did you go with Joyce?
Yvonne Hernandez: No I we- I went with a friend of mine named Joanne
Beryl Satter: mmhmm
Yvonne Hernandez: um, think just a friend of mine. No, I didn't go with Joyce. Joyce didn't want to go there 'cause it was too, uh, it wasn't so upscale, it was just, you know, rip and tear bar, and she's not going in there. And I'm like, well I'm going in there. So I went in there with a friend of mine, and it was *fun*,

Beryl Satter: (laughs)
Yvonne Hernandez: you know, I remember, and I went
Beryl Satter: What was it like in there?
Yvonne Hernandez: You've
Beryl Satter: Well let's see-
Yvonne Hernandez: never been in there?
Beryl Satter: No, no,
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah-
Beryl Satter: and what years was this that you went?
Yvonne Hernandez: oh god, I was...I would have to say '78? 79?
Beryl Satter: You never went to like Zanzibar or um
Yvonne Hernandez: I've been to the Zanzibar
Beryl Satter: Oh you went to Zanzibar?
Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm
Beryl Satter: Was that a
Yvonne Hernandez: that's a good place I we-
Beryl Satter: gay place?
Yvonne Hernandez: No, I- I don't remember it being a gay place.
Beryl Satter: But you went with women or?
Yvonne Hernandez: I used to- well, we'd just go with friends and family, my brothers
Beryl Satter: yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, we would go, or my brother, I should say
Beryl Satter: 'Cause a *lot* of gay people were involved in making that place.
Yvonne Hernandez: See I didn't know that
Beryl Satter: yeah
Yvonne Hernandez: I used to dance a lot at the Zanzibar, I was always there, um, before it was
the Holiday Inn
Beryl Satter: right
Yvonne Hernandez: before it was Zanzibar
Beryl Satter: Right
Yvonne Hernandez: It was a Holiday Inn and I used to go to the dances at the Holiday Inn, and
then it became the Zanzibar. I didn't know that.
Beryl Satter: That a lot of gay people were involved? There was some guy, Al Murphy, he
started this place called Le Joc, and then, I don't know, some people he knew, they got these, uh,
Larry Levin and these people from New York from like Paradise Garage for like
Yvonne Hernandez: ohhh
Beryl Satter: doing the music, and there's a whole thing about Zanzibar and um the kinda Jersey
house sound that they created
Yvonne Hernandez: oh. How 'bout that

Beryl Satter: So um yeah so I mean I know it was not a gay club at all, but I think a lot- like, gay people kinda helped make it, and there was a gay presence

Yvonne Hernandez: huh

Beryl Satter: you know? So, I mean, you went with friends but you didn't go with women particularly, or?

Yvonne Hernandez: No, I never went on a date or anything like that

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: I always just went there with um uh my brother had a, big group of friends and- 'cause you know, it was- it was a type of thing and- where- you know, or, I was raised, "Ok , you wanna go dancing? Your brother goes, you can go,

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: if your brother doesn't go, you're not going," so I was to my brother, "Please, let's go to the dance!"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: So he would bring his friends and uh yeah.

Beryl Satter: So um what was Murphy's like in the late 70s?

Yvonne Hernandez: Murphy's, it was nice. I liked it. I remember going in and walking straight as soon as you walk in you go straight to the in- I always walked to- straight to the end of the bar. And they had, you know, um the sounds of Donna Summer and disco, the men, I remember the men dancing disco, was like, wow they can do some things- they could really dance.

Beryl Satter: So this, like, 'cause that other place you told me they wouldn't let you hold hands or dance, but at Murphy's-

Yvonne Hernandez: At Murphy's, yes, Murphy's there was dancing, it was just, it was all out there. Murphy's didn't give a hoot about anything. So you could hold hands in Murphy's, you could kiss in Murphy's, you could sit on each other's lap and it was great. 'Cause it was, there were no straight people involved who were afraid of- you know, being chastised or criticized or [inaudible] (1:20:54) But Murphy's was nice. And the last time I went to Murphy's was not- was right before the eminent domain took over and just got rid of it

Beryl Satter: when was that?

Yvonne Hernandez: uhhh I'm gonna say about...I wanna say about 6 or 7 years ago. That was the last time I was there.

Beryl Satter: hmm. I forget wha- so where was it located?

Yvonne Hernandez: On Edison- Edison Place. It was at Edison Place. Right now it's at- it was- like where the Prudential is? On Edison Place. Edison and Mulberry St.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm, right

Yvonne Hernandez: uh-huh

Beryl Satter: yeah, I mean people say different things about the place. But it sounds- a- you know, we're calling this thing sanctuary about these clubs

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: as- 'cause a lot of people say, "well, when I would go to those places, it was a place to feel safe" and, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: I actually did, I felt safe there, I felt um comfortable I felt safe, I didn't feel like I had to watch what I was doing, like don't hold hands, don't dance, don't this, don't kiss, don't that, just-

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: just sit there and just drink and spend money and that's it, that's all you're here for

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: but Murphy's wasn't like that. They would have uh I don't know, entertainment sometimes, they would have a drag singer, or a-

Beryl Satter: um...

Yvonne Hernandez: and it was fun (1:22:29)

Beryl Satter: Do you remember any of the drag singers? Like, who they were, who performed?

Yvonne Hernandez: No

Beryl Satter: the names?

Yvonne Hernandez: No, but they- they would imitate- they would do uh, they would imitate like Donna Summer or Diana Ross at the time

Beryl Satter: mmhmm. hmm.

Yvonne Hernandez: It was fun

Beryl Satter: yeah um and so I'm try- so you went there during the period when you were hanging out with the other women but

Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm

Beryl Satter: before- before you got married, like in that

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: period, right?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah.

Beryl Satter: yeah. So sometimes you said there were like six of you or like there was a little group of you,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, there was a group of-

Beryl Satter: and would you all, like, piling up[?]

Yvonne Hernandez: Well I-

Beryl Satter: in there?

Yvonne Hernandez: I always went there- I- the only time I ever went there was with a friend of mine, her name was Joanne. And she was a friend of my ex-husband's and she used to like to go in there too, she was always kinda rough looking, now I know why she liked to go in there so much, and

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: she always went in- she always went- we always went together, and nothing

ever happened between us, we were always- were just friends, and I was even going in there *while* I was dating my ex-husband

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I was just going- you know, I was like in transition, I was like, "okay I don't want to do this anymore, but let me just go to this gay bar one more time." Until eventually it just faded away and I just stopped going completely to anything that had anything to do with gay

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:23:48)

Yvonne Hernandez: nothing, I kept away from there, it was just, nothing.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I wouldn't read anything gay, no gay books, no gay nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. I just need to get rid of all of this, and I literally convinced myself that this was just a stupid point in my life that I got rid of. It's

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: never coming back.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Sanibel, Florida said, "Hey!"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: "Welcome back!"

Beryl Satter: How did your kids, your- your sons are they...uh supportive of you?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yes. My

Beryl Satter: to keep watching

Yvonne Hernandez: my oldest son said to me something that I- it- it was kinda sad, he said, "Mom," he said, "you always looked sad when we were kids." He said, "and I always thought it was me. I always thought I did something." And I said, "get out of here. No you didn't think that," he said, "yes I did." he said, "ok mom's sad today, maybe- maybe I should do this, maybe n-" and he says, "no, I realize it now," he said, "but as a child that's- that's what I thought." He said I realized now you were just- you were just so...you know, suppressive." and just... My other son Joseph he had- do- something, youngest one, he doesn't really, he doesn't talk abou- he doesn't, he's not ashamed of it, you know, he- he tells his friends, you know, he doesn't care, but he doesn't talk about it at all. (1:25:37)

Beryl Satter: Right. But you and the older one discuss it.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah. Not very often, I don't, uh, I guess I'm old school and I don't really feel like I have to be all out there with my children and-

Beryl Satter: oh sure, but

Yvonne Hernandez: take them to gay pride

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: and all of this and all, yeah

Beryl Satter: do you go to the gay pride? In Newark?

Yvonne Hernandez: I haven't been in like 2 years

Beryl Satter: Yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: haven't been- I haven't been to the one in New York either

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah I just...

Beryl Satter: It's been a long time with those

Yvonne Hernandez: I haven't- the last time I went, and it was just crazy, just, and we- you can't go- you have to walk 10 blocks to go around the corner

Beryl Satter: I know

Yvonne Hernandez: and

Beryl Satter: pain

Yvonne Hernandez: I said no, I can't do that,

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: no I'm not gonna do this anymore.

Beryl Satter: it's sensitive of your older son to sort of, get a sense that you were suppressed.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: And- and that made you- gave you a little air of sadness, and

Yvonne Hernandez: mm

Beryl Satter: that you don't have it anymore (1:26:36)

Yvonne Hernandez: I don't- I- honestly when he said it to me, I thought I was covering it up so well.

Beryl Satter: mmm, kids are so sensitive

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: I though, I am just covering it- and I didn't even think I was covering anything up, I just thought I was just um you know, realizing that this is not me, you know.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: it was tough

Beryl Satter: Yeah. You've been through quite a journey, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Because you have these, like, moments when you're totally, like, just like, telling your mother when you're, you know, 19

Yvonne Hernandez: I had lot of scales

Beryl Satter: Yeah, yeah (laughs) exactly

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah. I did all of this, and now I'm like, this, ok, now I'm good,

Beryl Satter: yeah, that's what happens at our-

Yvonne Hernandez: now my head is where it's supposed to be.

Beryl Satter: it's- at the age, we're at that age

Yvonne Hernandez: age, yes

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: After a while you're like, you know I don't need this stress, I just need to relax.

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: and enjoy myself

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: I enjoy what I do now, I have rehearsal starting tomorrow for a new show that's coming up in June, we have two plays coming up

Beryl Satter: huh.

Yvonne Hernandez: I perform in the Vagina Monologues annually, I love performing, I do a one-woman show

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm I perform a one-woman show where I do all different characters, um, I have a- you know, and that's, that's what I love doing.

Beryl Satter: Theater, that's so cool.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah I love the theater, I love-

Beryl Satter: When did you get into that?

Yvonne Hernandez: I just did at the Nuremberg Band show, three weeks ago, Shakespeare in the Park. Not Shakespeare in the Park, Shakespeare sonnet readings.

Beryl Satter: oh god, how nice

Yvonne Hernandez: I had to read Sonnet 121.

Beryl Satter: Nice

Yvonne Hernandez: "'Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd, when not to be, received reproach of being, and the just pleasure lost which is not so deemed not by our feeling, but by others' seeing: for why should others' false adulterate eyes give salutation to my sportive blood? Or on my frailties why are frailer spies, which in their wills count bad what I think good? No; I am that I am, and they that level at my abuses reckon up their own; they may be...something...I may be...something...though they themselves be bevel; by their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown; unless this general evil they maintain, all men are bad, and in their badness reign."

(1:29:03)

Beryl Satter: wow.

Yvonne Hernandez: I missed the one word, but when I did it in the park

Beryl Satter: At the-

Yvonne Hernandez: I did the whole thing

Beryl Satter: Tha- what sonnet is that?

Yvonne Hernandez: That's Sonnet 121

Beryl Satter: I mean, it's very appropriate,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: it's like about everything you've been

Yvonne Hernandez: They-

Beryl Satter: talking about

Yvonne Hernandez: I didn't- they said to- I sent a submission tape, and they said, ok, we want you to do Sonnet 121. I wanted to do Sonnet 130

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, uh, which is 130...uh, oh, "my mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun," that's how that one starts. I wanted to do that one, and they said oh we want you to do 121. I said, ok, fine, so I learned 121. I do, I- a- "Taming the Shrew" Catherine's monologue...

Beryl Satter: who does these Shakespeare in the Park thing? What organization is that?

Yvonne Hernandez: It's, um, it's not Shakespeare in the Park, it's put together by Shakespeare Meet-up Group, and the girl's name is...let me get my phone. She actually sent me an email the other day

Beryl Satter: making sure, looks like that battery's still good

Yvonne Hernandez: oh, battery's doing good

Beryl Satter: um,

Yvonne Hernandez: she sent me an email the other day, she actually uh she sent me an email and she said, "I have a poster that, I have a poster that I want to send you." And I was like, wow. It's a cop- poster of a copy of the portrait that was up there, and she wants to give it to m- I said, what, 154 sonnets, and she picked me to give it to.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I think that's pretty impressive (laughs)

Beryl Satter: (laughs) (1:30:46)

Yvonne Hernandez: I was impressed with myself over that one. Yeah she sent me...stop doing that. (phone vibrates) (inaudible). hmm.

Beryl Satter: Do you feel- think that the gay scene in Newark is pretty divided, like, the women and the men don't mix too much, or not? I wonder about that 'cause that-

Yvonne Hernandez: I th-

Beryl Satter: it seemed like-

Yvonne Hernandez: think...I don't think- I don't feel that, from what I've seen anyway, I guess I don't really hang out too much in Newark anymore, because there is if there is something gay to do, it's probably still as underground as it was in the 70s, I don't know. But-

Beryl Satter: Other than the church, huh?

Yvonne Hernandez: Yeah, but even the- even when it was underground I *knew* about the different places to go to, but I don't know, I don't feel that they're divided

Beryl Satter: mhm that's good.

Yvonne Hernandez: no.

Beryl Satter: um, I mean some people, it- say yes, and some people say no.

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, it's their perception, I guess, how they see it. I don't thi-

Beryl Satter: sure. I mean, sounds like, you know, your group of friends, like right when you were young was a mixed group, you know

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: it was gay men and lesbians hanging out,

Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm

Beryl Satter: right, and

Yvonne Hernandez: And that's the way I kept then, I mean, now I- if I go out, I'll go to maybe, well, Ruby Fruit is closed

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:32:23)

Yvonne Hernandez: So now it's uh, what's the name of the other place, Henrietta's. With these teenyboppers

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: and bless their little souls, I mean you know, they're out there, "Hey I am gay, hear me roar!" We didn't do that when I was young, you know, I mean...And good for them. I- I look at it as you know uh I'm a trailblazer! (laughs) um, you know

Beryl Satter: yeah. (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: so

Beryl Satter: They just keep getting younger (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah. Ok and I can't find this girl's name

Beryl Satter: Oh, it's okay

Yvonne Hernandez: alright

Beryl Satter: That's okay. I probably

Yvonne Hernandez: I can always emai-

Beryl Satter: shouldn't keep you, I mean, it's tw- we've been talking a while. It's really, um

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm sorry, I feel like I didn't give you enough information but I helped, it was,

Beryl Satter: No, there's lots here! No, there's tons

Yvonne Hernandez: Okay, okay

Beryl Satter: don't worry.

Yvonne Hernandez: Alright.

Beryl Satter: Um, I mean the- I don't know if there's any- um, now we've got noise, see? It's- we ended at the right time. I mean, if there's any like last thing you'd wanna tell me about?

Yvonne Hernandez: um, hmm...well, like I said before, I'm at a point in my life that I'm like, I wish I could have had what I'm feeling now, when I was 19, and just allowed myself to be happy.

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I wish I would have allowed myself to make other people happy. Because my own suppression and my own uh closet just affected everyone around me, you know.

Beryl Satter: mhm

Yvonne Hernandez: my brother you know and my sisters and when I was young, they they're great now, but when I was young, they were one of the ones, they were all one of the ones that

were always like, "ugh! why did my sister," especially my oldest brother, "you're an embarrassment. I can't go anywhere now because you know you don't know how many fights I've almost gotten into because of you and because of you, and because of me and all this gayness." But if I would've known then what I know now, I would've done things differently. I would've kept things out of my neighborhood, I would've kept things uh- because it was different then.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (1:34:58)

Yvonne Hernandez: So I would have um...been gay in New York (laughs)

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: instead of in New Jersey, and not embarrass my family. And give them time.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I didn't give them time. I mean, people say, "Oh I'm gonna come out to my family," and they want them to accept it right on the spot, but you don't understand, when you come out to your family, you have to give them time to soak this in. Not, "I'm gay, like it or leave it," you can't do that to a psyche- you can't do that to a person's head. Um, so I think I should've done things a little differently, I wouldn't have, you know, hit my mother between the brows the way I did. I would've had more respect for her feelings. Uh- and then maybe, you know, she would've...you know, maybe she felt challenged, I don't know. And that's why it was difficult for her. But I would do things differently. I would take the life that I have now and put it back then, that would be cool. But I can't do that

Beryl Satter: No, you never can

Yvonne Hernandez: All I can do is, is you know, be happy now, be happy for my kids. Be happy in my job. I love, again, I love performing, I love acting, singing a little bit, I do some karaoke

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: um, yeah

Beryl Satter: How 'bout your brothers and sisters now? Have they- are they accepting now?

Yvonne Hernandez: Oh they're- they're wonderful.

Beryl Satter: Now they're great, yeah?

Yvonne Hernandez: They- they're wonderful, yeah, yeah. My youngest brother, Eric, he's my roommate, we have a nice apartment up on Warwick St. He found the apartment when his girlfriend threw him out

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: Uh, I let him come stay with me and my apartment was too small, so he went out and got a bigger apartment, and which was good, because we split the rent and it's nice. And he's my little brother, he's 11 years younger. So when I was a teenager he was a little boy that I always had to carry around with me 'cause my mother was working. So we're close. And um, yeah h-

Beryl Satter: And the older one is good too?

Yvonne Hernandez: it- the older one is the one that- that gave me a problem, because

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: he was my age, at the-

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: the other two

Beryl Satter: much younger

Yvonne Hernandez: they were much younger so they were like, "huh? What's going on?"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: but uh, but they're good with it

Beryl Satter: The older brother

Yvonne Hernandez: they

Beryl Satter: too now? (1:37:46)

Yvonne Hernandez: oh yeah. Yeah, he's very good, yeah.

Beryl Satter: And if you um had to- so, if you had to give advice to younger, like, you know, gay kids now coming out, just now, like teenagers and young adults, would-

Yvonne Hernandez: Who are coming out, I would say, be considerate.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: Don't just go up to your mother and say, "Hey, I'm gay" and as- if they freak out on you, you know, you just threw something on their lap. You have to give people time. It's not that they don't love you, of course they love you, but they need time to- and they probably know it anyway. They're just in denial, it's a denial thing. Give them time, sit back, don't make them feel guilty. Because these people love you and you love them, so you have to respect each other's feelings. Let them get used to it first, before you- you know, I mean, a lot of people would disagree with this, but this is just my own- I'm speaking about my own personal- if I could go back, I would have, instead of, "Look ma, here's my girlfriend." She's already dealing with a lot. Let her, you know, get used to it. Let her see that I'm okay even though I'm like this, and then bring the girlfriend in, but the problem with that is that the girlfriend feels left out, and the girlfriend feels, "oh you're- you're keeping me away from your family" No, it's not that. You know, I'm just giving my family time to, you know, get used to- there's friends. I mean, people have changed, I did the same thing with my friends. I just "yeah I'm gay, if you don't like it..." and that just caused a lot of problems. So I would talk to them and say- now, if I would- if I could do things differently, I would've taken like my best friend and said- and talked to them. And I'm sure they wouldn't have been able to accept it at the time, but it's different now. Now gay kids and straight kids all hang out together.

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: They didn't do that when I was- you know, it was- it was rough. I would say, just be careful, it's, I think it's a rough life, it's fun when you first come out, "Oh it's fun! we're gonna have fun! we're gonna drink and have fun!" and that's wonderful. But be careful how you have fun, and who you have fun with, and who you talk to, and, you know?

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: yeah. That makes sense.

Yvonne Hernandez: I think, yeah, to me the advice would be- your family, be considerate of your family and...if they freak out, good! Let them freak out, let them let it out. It's, you know, people, "oohhh! I told my mom and she freaked out!" I think now, good my mother freaked out, that's great. I should've just let her freak out and then talk to her later after she calmed down instead of, you know, giving her an ultimatum. "You must accept this and you vill like it"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: you know, it's not like that.

Beryl Satter: mm

Yvonne Hernandez: you know

Beryl Satter: yeah, well this is always when you're- once you're the age your mother was, then you have more empathy, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah.

Beryl Satter: because you- when you were much younger than, you're like, you're just like, alien, you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: 'cause when I told my mother, my mother was much younger than I am now

Beryl Satter: uh-huh

Yvonne Hernandez: you know?

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: and to me, she was like this much older woman who happens to be my mother.

Beryl Satter: hmm

Yvonne Hernandez: and so she's just gonna have to suck it up. No, she doesn't have to suck it up if she doesn't want to.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: she doesn't have to. She doesn't have to do anything that she doesn't want to do, you know? It's like, people want you to- you know, will defend it- it's like when someone says something, you know, and someone gets offended, it's like, it's okay when you have your opinion but when someone else has an opinion it's like, no. So... yeah

Beryl Satter: okay. I'm gonna stop it to

Yvonne Hernandez: mmhmm

Beryl Satter: change the batteries 'cause I am worried, 'cause I was warned that if I didn't, it- I could lose what's on here so I'm just gonna stop and change batterie-

Beryl Satter: So ok, yeah, well if- I'll be in touch, I mean first of all, I'll make sure to, like I said, we have to- it might be a while

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: be 'til the end of the summer

Yvonne Hernandez: alright

Beryl Satter: 'cause we have to get, we're gonna get *students* to do this part.

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: 'cause transcribing it's slow

Yvonne Hernandez: so the students are gonna transcribe

Beryl Satter: yeah, I think we're gonna get

Yvonne Hernandez: oh that's cool

Beryl Satter: yeah, yeah, we're gonna try to get some stu-

Yvonne Hernandez: 'cause they get to hear the advice (laughs)

Beryl Satter: yeah, yeah, exactly! that's why we ask about, about,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: um, you know, the next generation. and um,

Yvonne Hernandez: mm

Beryl Satter: so there's that. and then if you're interested in performing, some of the s-

Yvonne Hernandez: I would love to

Beryl Satter: yeah,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: I could um let you know about

Yvonne Hernandez: what- what is- an-

Beryl Satter: Do you know who Rodney Gilbert is?

Yvonne Hernandez: why does that name sound familiar?

Beryl Satter: He does a mural projects a lot of art and theater in the Newar-

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, yeah did he have the place over it's- I think it's across the street from the church, it was on the second floor of Burns[?]

Beryl Satter: I don't know I m-

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: I'm not sure, he

Yvonne Hernandez: 'kay

Beryl Satter: has something called Yendor Productions. Yendor Productions, anyway, he might

Yvonne Hernandez: mm

Beryl Satter: be interested in, you know, getting, if you want to do an open mic at, or something, I mean we're just, (1:09) like,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: would you want to-

Yvonne Hernandez: would any subject or to- is it like-

Beryl Satter: lo- well,

Yvonne Hernandez: queer, or

Beryl Satter: queer or-

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: sanctuary, anything you think

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: is related to sanctuary and gayness, like

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: wherever people found sanctuary

Yvonne Hernandez: I could pick one of my monologues and just read-

Beryl Satter: yeah, yeah,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, yeah, ok

Beryl Satter: so it's, you know, we'll see- I'll-

Yvonne Hernandez: ok

Beryl Satter: I'll let you know about that, and um

Yvonne Hernandez: mhm

Beryl Satter: 'cause we're gonna do this big thing in October. you know?

Yvonne Hernandez: okay.

Beryl Satter: and uh yeah, we'll just, once it's, you know

Yvonne Hernandez: okay, do you know where, I mean here in the uni-

Beryl Satter: it's- you know we're not sure the location yet,

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: 'cause Rodney is working it out, but there's gonna be a curated art show

Yvonne Hernandez: oh, okay

Beryl Satter: um, that he and some people are gonna pick art and (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: oh, right

Beryl Satter: and then we're doing uh this historical panel where we're gonna try to, um, you know find out, like, you know, trace some of the history of the clubs and stuff

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: and bars and uh what you said about Murphy's is really interesting, (2:00)

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: because

Yvonne Hernandez: everybody remembers Murphy's

Beryl Satter: everybody- it's such a place, and I have a feeling it was different at different moments, like you were

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: there when it was like drag-

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: drag queens doing-

Yvonne Hernandez: they were, yeah

Beryl Satter: Donna Summers and later

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: I'm sure it was something else

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: and, it would be, I don't

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: know,

Yvonne Hernandez: then they were DJing and they didn't have a DJ, and then there was- yeah

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: alright

Beryl Satter: you should if you could think of all anybody else that- do you have um any kinda archi- like, any letters or posters or anything left over of-

Yvonne Hernandez: mmm, I have to

Beryl Satter: It would've

Yvonne Hernandez: take a- I

Beryl Satter: had to be from when you were really young

Yvonne Hernandez: I have a picture of a friend of mine that I was- I- I- I was crazy about her when I was a kid. I was about 15 years old, I have a picture of her and I,

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I was 15

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I must've had a thing for older women, I

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I was 15 and she was...about 26.

Beryl Satter: mmhmm (2:55)

Yvonne Hernandez: and I- Puerto Rican girl, she had this afro, and this beautiful little figure and I thought she was just the cat's meow. And I have a picture of her and I, I'm 15, she's 26, n- and I have a picture, I ran into her in the Puerto Rican parade, about 6 years ago?

Beryl Satter: mmhmm

Yvonne Hernandez: and we took a picture together. So I have a picture of her and I and an- then a picture of her and I thirty years later.

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: I wanted to bring the picture to show it to you, I forgot it

Beryl Satter: mmm

Yvonne Hernandez: um, I have a trunk and- I can look through to see...

Beryl Satter: yeah, stuff left over or anything from you know, your gay life,

Yvonne Hernandez: uhh

Beryl Satter: in like pictures of your friends like the 6 of you that used to hang out

Yvonne Hernandez: ooh

Beryl Satter: or, anything I don't know whatever you think would be appropriate

Yvonne Hernandez: those, I don't think-

Beryl Satter: you don't keep that? it's oka-

Yvonne Hernandez: so long ago

Beryl Satter: I know, it's a loong time ago

Yvonne Hernandez: but you know, i- uh people do keep things that long

Beryl Satter: they do, they do

Yvonne Hernandez: but myself, with my own, with what I went through and just getting rid of stuff that I just didn't want to look at anymore

Beryl Satter: you, right, you like consciously did get rid of stuff

Yvonne Hernandez: s-

Beryl Satter: well, I just thought I'd ask, I mean, you never know and if you-

Yvonne Hernandez: but that one picture that I have, you kn- and she's gay too, so

Beryl Satter: oh cool!

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: oh that would be cool to see

Yvonne Hernandez: yea- it's a beautiful picture

Beryl Satter: maybe you could scan it

Yvonne Hernandez: uh yeah I'll send it to you, um, yeah-

Beryl Satter: the two of them (4:12)

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, the two of them

Beryl Satter: well, you have my email, 'cause you read that email like-

Yvonne Hernandez: ok, right, yes

Beryl Satter: but I can give you a card, I'll

Yvonne Hernandez: yes

Beryl Satter: give you

Yvonne Hernandez: yes

Beryl Satter: a card anyway

Yvonne Hernandez: yes

Beryl Satter: um, and uh you know we'll see, but um

Yvonne Hernandez: let me make sure I have everything

Beryl Satter: 'cause like, we've heard like little bits like that there were some like gay

Yvonne Hernandez: but they were so

Beryl Satter: Puerto Rican clubs

Yvonne Hernandez: hush-hush

Beryl Satter: and we, and we never

Yvonne Hernandez: I nev- I never went

Beryl Satter: found it, we didn't know where they are

Yvonne Hernandez: I never went to the Puerto Rican clubs, it was so hush-hush back then, so like sh-sh-(whispers)

Beryl Satter: so you would be like that would be a dangerous place to go if there- if it had- if it existed

Yvonne Hernandez: I probably wouldn't want to go to the Puerto Rican places, only because

Beryl Satter: that's gonna get it out everywhere, kind of thing?

Yvonne Hernandez: no, it's just that Puerto Rican women are so, "are you lookin' at my girl! you were (angry noise)"

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: "I'm not a- please, no I'm not looking at your g- I'm- you know what, I'm going home. I don't need this bullshit."

Beryl Satter: (laughs)

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm not looking at your g- I'm not looking.

Beryl Satter: oh cool

Yvonne Hernandez: and it

Beryl Satter: nice

Yvonne Hernandez: it- it- they keep, cranky people,

Beryl Satter: yeah

Yvonne Hernandez: that's- you know?

Beryl Satter: yeah, so you just di-

Yvonne Hernandez: did you - you gave me your card? (5:13)

Beryl Satter: yeah, I did, I'll give it to

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm so busy talking-

Beryl Satter: you again if you want it, I've got a lot of them

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm so busy talking that I didn't realize-

Beryl Satter: here's one, here it is. yeah, so you weren't into the scene, basically, it was too much for you

Yvonne Hernandez: oh I put it in here, that's what it is. Um, yeah, I just...I've been, I used to go to a few places in Jersey City, but that was...that's Jersey City. okay, made sure I have everything. Thank you

Beryl Satter: Alright, are you good?

Yvonne Hernandez: so much!

Beryl Satter: okay, alright, it was good,

Yvonne Hernandez: great talking to you

Beryl Satter: really great to meet you, thank you so much it- I can't

Yvonne Hernandez: thank you

Beryl Satter: tell you how much I appreciate it,

Yvonne Hernandez: oh I appreciate it too

Beryl Satter: and once we have it down and you read through it you'll- I think it'll be good.

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: you'll see there's a lot there

Yvonne Hernandez: I know it's- it- it's like, what's that when- it's all when you look at your picture, you're suddenly, "oh I don't like that picture" but

Beryl Satter: no but I-

Yvonne Hernandez: I think I'm gonna like it

Beryl Satter: I think you're gonna like it, I think other people are gonna

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: find it important

Yvonne Hernandez: good, good.

Beryl Satter: okay

Yvonne Hernandez: alright, thank you

Beryl Satter: well thanks again

Yvonne Hernandez: could I have- one of these? with the- or wa- can I- like one of these?

Beryl Satter: oh! um the questions? or the...the thing you signed?

Yvonne Hernandez: no, no, no, I just- so that I can read- (6:12)

Beryl Satter: this?

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah could-

Beryl Satter: yeah, let me-

Yvonne Hernandez: is it alright to have one?

Beryl Satter: yeah, sure, definitely. um, I can give-

Yvonne Hernandez: I don't have

Beryl Satter: I- I would gi-

Yvonne Hernandez: to have- I don't have to have this

Beryl Satter: w- alright, I'm gonna give you this

Yvonne Hernandez: the one that's signed

Beryl Satter: this I will give you,

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah, that-

Beryl Satter: and I'll keep the

Yvonne Hernandez: that- the

Beryl Satter: signed thing

Yvonne Hernandez: signed one I don't need

Beryl Satter: right

Yvonne Hernandez: I just, so that I could, um, show people

Beryl Satter: what you've done

Yvonne Hernandez: yeah

Beryl Satter: Alright, that makes sense

Yvonne Hernandez: I'm a scrapbook fanatic

Beryl Satter: oh! okay, now you're keeping stuff

Yvonne Hernandez: this is for my scrap- yes, I learned

Beryl Satter: okay

Yvonne Hernandez: the hard way!

Beryl Satter: Alright

Yvonne Hernandez: okay

Beryl Satter: take care!

Yvonne Hernandez: thank you!

Beryl Satter: See you! bye!

Yvonne Hernandez: do I go-

Beryl Satter: do you know where you're going? Well, the stairs, uh take a right, okay, the stairs that way, and there's- there's- you take a right there's another set of stairs, so [inaudible]

Yvonne Hernandez: okay thank you!

Beryl Satter: okay, bye.

[door closes] (7:07)