Oral History Interview of Judith R. Dushku

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Interview Summary

Judith Dushku, a professor in the Government Department, began her career at Suffolk University in 1966, and in the years since then, has witnessed many changes at Suffolk and in the city of Boston. In this interview, Dushku discusses the changes in the school, the city, and her own beliefs over that period of time; she also remarks upon the anti-war movement, civil rights, local and international politics, and the media’s role in international issues. Professor Dushku relates her admiration of Congressman Joe Moakley and concludes with her satisfaction with her tenure at Suffolk.
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CHRIS BARRETTO: Good afternoon, okay, Professor, just please, first, state your full name?

JUDITH DUSHKU: My name is Judith R. Dushku. But when I started at Suffolk, my name was Judith Rasmussen because I was a single person then. That was in 1966.

BARRETTO: Okay, and where did you grow up?

DUSHKU: All over the country, my father was in the Navy. I did not live outside of the United States, but I lived—I was born in Idaho, in the Rocky Mountains, but I lived every place from Florida—wherever there was a naval base.

BARRETTO: You lived on the naval bases?

DUSHKU: Uh-huh, or near them.

BARRETTO: And what kind of—what kind of experience was that like, rather than a typical childhood?

DUSHKU: Well, I just grew up expecting to move and having no sense, you know, no sense that I was necessarily—I necessarily belonged any one place. So it was a very American experience. The only thing that probably distinguished—our family felt that it was self-identifying. We grew up in a Mormon community and my parents had in Idaho, and so wherever we went, we found other Mormons. And so probably the closest thing you had to any sense of ethnicity, was not really ethnicity, but was really a religious connection. But other than that, like the students at Suffolk said, What are you? when I first came here, meaning, What is Rasmussen? I didn't know what the question meant, because everybody knew they were Italian or Irish or—and I said, “I don't know, I'm a woman.” And they said, No, no, what are you? What is Rasmussen? And I had to call my parents and be reminded that Rasmussen is a Danish name, but I had no connection with being Danish. I was a Mormon and mostly I was an American.
BARRETTO: American. Okay. Where did you attend college?

DUSHKU: It was the Mormon practice to always send your children, if they did well in high school, to Brigham Young University in Utah. So, I had no—it was never any question. I went out there and was very unhappy. I did not fit in, but I went out there with thirty thousand Mormon youth between 1960 and ’64.

BARRETTO: And were you able to, you know, study what you wanted, to do your own—?

DUSHKU: Yes, I decided I wanted to work for the government. I was very conservative. I wanted to be with the State Department. It was before the women’s movement. I was told by my honors professors, believe it or not, that I should hone my secretarial skills and go work for a congressman, maybe I’d be able to work my way up into Washington politics. But at the last minute I applied to the Fletcher School\(^{1}\) because my roommate was applying to the Fletcher School, and I not only got in, but I got a full scholarship, which was very surprising to me and changed the way I began to look at myself, because that meant that I was going for a professional degree and I could reject the idea of trying to work my way into something by being a good secretary.

But see, that was in the sixties, and people don’t realize that back then, it was absurd to think that you could get a professional degree. And most middle class families—and jump over that secretarial rung if you're a woman. It was very strange.

BARRETTO: Yeah, I was going—going to ask, I know it’s sort of a broad question, but, you know, a question about what were the sixties like if you were going from, you know, time of JFK’s reign all the way to Bobby Kennedy’s assassination?

DUSHKU: Because I was at Brigham Young, which was a very conservative place and dominated by people from the west, I missed the civil rights movement. I was quite oblivious to

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\(^{1}\) The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy is part of Tufts University, located in Medford, Massachusetts.
the campaign of JFK, but I very much remember his assassination. And I think that his assassination, when I was in Utah, was one of the first national political events that made me feel like I was missing something, that I was out of the mainstream of American national life.

And so, you know, in the years that followed, the civil rights movement came and I sort of was missing that, but I was aware I was missing it. So when I got to go to graduate school in Boston, I felt like I had a lot of compensatory work to do to figure out what had been going on in America in the four years that I’d been studying. I got good grades in school, but it was very ivory tower-ish.

BARRETTO: Now, when did you get to Boston?

DUSHKU: Sixty-four.

BARRETTO: Sixty-four?

DUSHKU: So, and the civil rights movement was sort of in swing. Went to the Fletcher School and began to get involved. It was during the next three or four years that my whole life changed because then the war became more real in Vietnam, and I went from being extremely conservative, obedient, Republican, respectful of government, to being a critic, an anti-war demonstrator and activist. I dropped out angrily from my Ph.D. program and pretty much put myself full time into the effort to stop the war. And when I came to Suffolk, it was to be a temporary place to get a paycheck while I pursued my anti-war activities. So this was very accidental and incidental to my life, coming to Suffolk.

And the—and fact is, I loved it and that's where I got close to students who were curious about why we were fighting in Vietnam. And so I just did a complete flip. I became a very radical critic of the U.S. government and their foreign policy and taught that in my classes and met other faculty who were similarly convinced of this. And Suffolk, I sort of feel like, was the place where I grew up and I came to appreciate much more the fullness of American politics, American life. It is—this has been a great place for me.
**BARRETTO:** That's great. So you answered already, but my question was Suffolk—was there a strong anti-war movement in Suffolk or, you know, in this area of Boston?

**DUSHKU:** It wasn’t—I wouldn't say it was huge, but it was very—it was significantly active at Suffolk. And one of—an interesting thing that I remember so well was that, a lot of my friends that I’d known at the Fletcher School, and also I’d met students who were at Harvard Law and in the Harvard graduate programs because Fletcher was very—had a lot of courses where we interacted, and all those students were getting into, like the adjutant general’s office and they were working for the military, but in non-combat positions. And when I came to Suffolk, it was really my first awareness in a very gut-like way that the Suffolk students, most of whom are from poorer families, many were first generation college kids, and they were the ones that were being drafted, it was a draft, they were the ones that were being drafted. And they were the ones that were being killed.

And so in the first few years I was here, you know, not the very first, not ’66, but by ’67, ’68, my students that I had taught were being killed in Vietnam and we would get notices that their bodies were being sent home. And I just went nuts because I could see the difference between what was happening to my wealthier, more—more upscale school colleagues who were in very protected military positions and the Suffolk students who were on the, on the front lines.

So that, so I also became very aware of class differences and how class played into the draft and privilege and all those kinds of things. And it was so distressing and so new to me, it was—I was ashamed at how little I appreciated those things before coming to Suffolk. And then I had students who came back from the war who came to my classes, and were clearly very damaged by the war, students who were very traumatized. And the whole term post traumatic shock syndrome didn't really have any—that was not a known phenomenon. But, I remember students who came back who talked about nightmares and who were—who jumped whenever there was a loud sound in the room. The war just was present at the university.
And so, I worked with a lot of veterans against the war, who I invited and made sure they were not excluded and kicked out, I invited to have teach-ins in what now is the C. Walsh Theater and used to have day-long, two or three-day sit-ins where veterans would come and talk against the war, and it was powerful. And there were some faculty who objected, but the school was pretty, pretty hands off. I know I had a lot of ideological enemies, but Suffolk was a very supportive place.

BARRETTO: Much more supportive than around Utah and the west?

DUSHKU: The west, it was not just that it was not supportive, it was just sort of in another world. It just didn't—it just felt like it was disengaged.

BARRETTO: What were your recollections of the 1968 assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy?

DUSHKU: I remember that my radio went on to wake me up in the morning with the news of Martin Luther King. I was horrified, called all my friends. And—within—I guess I was already working in a great society program through Phillips Brooks House at Harvard, but I felt a real eagerness to get into Roxbury where I was doing volunteer work with these kids. And I just felt—I just felt like this was America’s huge loss and I was horrified. It was a devastating thing, and I was so much more engaged at that time than I was when Jack Kennedy was killed that it was a much more personal thing for me.

BARRETTO: Yeah. Did you see any parallels in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the Vietnam War?

DUSHKU: Absolutely, but I have not seen any parallels in terms of the power and the passion behind the anti-war movements. I mean, I've been to a few anti-war rallies and they were poorly attended. I've been to Washington, been to New York, I've been to two or three in Boston, and in my hometown, in Watertown now, and they're pretty puny compared to what we used to have during the Vietnam War. There’s a little—I'm a little bit optimistic that this movement behind
[Barack] Obama feels a little bit like the anti-war movement felt in terms of the size and excitement of large groups of people across not only ethnic and color lines, but also age lines, and so that's kind of exciting and compelling.

I mean, I’m very defensive of Hillary [Clinton] because I hate the sexism that's part of the anti-Hillary campaign. It’s just appalling to me that people say the things they do about her as a woman. But I'm shifting out—I started out very much behind John Edwards, as the only Democrat that I could possibly support because he was much more radical on economic issues. But I'm now compelled to say the excitement around Obama and the sense that he might be the inspiration behind a real mass movement for involving people of all ages, as something that goes even beyond his policies. I mean, I'm still critical of a lot of his policies, but I think he’s getting people involved in the policy talk in a way that they haven’t been since the sixties.

BARRETTO: You know, there's a lot of comparisons with elections of 2008 with the elections of 1968, the sort of same—same problems going on in the country. And I can definitely, you know, looking, you know, back at history, see that yeah, there are a lot of similarities.

DUSHKU: Yeah, and it’s exciting. I mean, it’s great to hear students say, No, I won't take that.

BARRETTO: Do you believe the anti-war movement would be different if there was a draft?

DUSHKU: Absolutely. I mean, there's nothing like facing that possibility of death that causes not just the draftee but the families—I mean, conservative mothers and fathers were full of patriotism until their son got his draft notice and—and also, in those days, they didn't have embedded journalists, and so you sit down with your TV tray and watch the news, and the first thing on the evening news was the number of soldiers killed and we were very aware of the number of deaths. And everybody whose kid got a draft notice knew that their kid could be one of those in three months.

BARRETTO: Moving on, how has—you said you came to Boston around 1964. How has Boston changed since you were first introduced to the city?
DUSHKU: Well, I was introduced to it here at Suffolk, because is I’d gone to grad school over on the Tufts campus, which is kind of suburban compared to downtown Boston. So, I came to the city through Suffolk. Suffolk was very, very different in terms of its demographic portrait in the sixties. It really was the working person’s school and it was very white, but very Italian and Irish immigrant white. And people were, again, first generation, for the most part, college students, that came from families where the parents had been bricklayers and painters and things like that. And they were very proud of their kids, the kids felt a lot of responsibility for doing well in school.

And so it was, to me, it was kind of radical because it was very pro union and all of that. But, it was also very conservative because it was—it tended to be quite a racist place—and also quite parochial in that it was pretty largely Catholic, which was fascinating to me because I had barely known Catholics, particularly as a majority of the population, and was fascinated and excited to learn. I mean, it sounds ridiculous now, but I didn't know what Ash Wednesday was, and they used to have Mass in what was now the C. Walsh Theater. I remember coming to school one day and seeing people pouring out of the theater and they had a priest giving Mass in the theater. Now Suffolk was always a secular school, but it was so largely Catholic that it seemed appropriate to let the school’s university be used as a place that a priest could have Mass.

And we had Richard Cardinal Cushing² come one day and they put a big stage up over Temple Street, and Richard Cardinal Cushing spoke and I was just fascinated by the church politics. And I went to Dorgan’s. My students were appalled by how little I knew about Boston city politics and so they were always taking me on excursions to historically important places in Boston. And you’d go down and hear the politicians blasted and there’d always be some friendly priest that would try to, you know, bring me up to date on what was going on and couldn't believe that someone was teaching politics at a university that didn't know more about Boston. But I learned a lot from that.

² Richard Cardinal Cushing (1895-1970), who was raised in South Boston, was a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. He served as Archbishop of Boston from 1944 to 1970 and became a cardinal in 1958.
And, so it was that—then the university was very much of that flavor. So that aspect of Boston I feel like I got very heavily introduced to quickly and I appreciated it a lot. Because I knew nothing about it. I was just not an urban person. The biggest city I’d lived in was Battle Creek, Michigan, and that was not Chicago and not Detroit. I mean, it was a fairly large city, but it was made up of people that were very midwestern and not migrants from the eastern cities or migrants from the meatpacking plants and things like that. They made cereal.

BARRETTTO: (laughs) You mentioned that some, you know, some of the racism you saw. You must obviously remember the busing crisis in Boston. What are some of your recollections of that whole turbulent time here?

DUSHKU: Well, I remember that I often took students to model United Nations events in New York City at the U.N. or, you know, at a university near the U.N. Sometimes, you went to the one at Harvard, but I preferred to take them out of town to get them sort of familiar with other parts of America. And decided during the busing crisis that it was important for the students who were almost always white in my group that they should have the experience of being a minority. So I decided rather than to go to a model U.N., I would take them to a model OAU, which was the Organization of African Unity. I was teaching African politics.

So, we went to Howard University, which was 97 percent black, and we actually stayed for the first eight years that we went, in a hotel that was on the campus and run by students who were in a hotel management program. So, we would be—there were students from many other universities who were black, white and everything. But here we were on a predominantly black campus where all the managers of this hotel were either students or adults who were black. And—then we talked about it a lot, so the students in my group would go back to our hotel rooms and they would talk about what it was like for the first time in their lives to be a minority.

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3 In 1974, a federal judge, W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. ordered the Boston school district to remedy its racial imbalance by sending students, usually by bus, to schools outside their racially homogeneous neighborhoods. The plan went into effect in September of 1974 and sparked fierce debate and violence throughout the City of Boston.

4 Howard University is a historically black university located in Washington, D.C.
And of course then we always represented African countries. So we would have to simulate being the ambassadors from Uganda or the ambassadors from Zaire or ambassadors from Sierra Leone. So then we would go to the embassies of these countries where we were also in face to face contact with Africans. And then we usually tried to arrange social events where we went out to dinner with these diplomats from African countries.

And students just said it was life changing because many of them came from places where blacks were these invaders in their schools, backed up by armed National Guard, and to be in a different situation vis-à-vis people with black skin was very important for them. But I had some students who were very nervous and when I said things like, “Relax, you're fine,” they would say, You don’t know what it’s like. We've been under court ordered busing and I'm from Charlestown or I'm from here or I'm from there. And I've been going to high school with people that are armed, and you have no idea what that's like. High school has been a scary experience. And when I come down here, race is symbolic of the kind of problems which require armed policemen and armed military.

And so it was—it was brought home to me in lots of ways, but that was one, that students were on edge all through high school; white students, black students, because it was such a war. It was not—it was not just a political conflict, it was daily confrontations. So, I learned a lot about that.

And then we have some good people here who are on the faculty that were very much a part of that. And they've talked a lot about the sort of misunderstoodness [sic] of people from South Boston, the anger at people in the city for being places where the busing was carried out, where the suburbs got to be self righteous and didn't have to participate. But it, I mean, it was complicated.

Then we also had some recruitings for faculty after the—about ten years after the busing, and we had black candidates who said they just couldn't move to Boston because they’d been told so much about how dangerous it was for black families to live in the Boston area. So, it was—it was embarrassing. I felt responsible for the city and its crimes against black people who were outsiders. I felt a lot of, a lot of responsibility for that. I just felt awful saying to a candidate,
“You do know there are certain parts of the city where you cannot live.” It just felt ugly to say, but yeah, I didn't want them to move into Dorchester because the rents looked lower in the newspaper. Or, maybe not Dorchester, but didn't want them to move into some place like West Roxbury and end up—you know, their yards trashed. And it was common.

BARRETTO: Okay. Now that Suffolk has, you know, gone international with campuses in Madrid and elsewhere and foreign students studying at Boston, do you think it’s helped or maybe hurt the academy?

DUSHKU: I think it’s both. I think mostly it’s helped. It’s a fascinatingly diverse place. I love to walk into a classroom and have to watch myself to not say, “We in the United States, we in the United States,” because, you know, my classes are almost always, at least a quarter, not from the United States. And I have to say, “Those of us who are from the United States may feel this way. Those of you who are from Latin America, those of you who are from Africa,” and that's healthy. And I always try to make sure that students who are from other places feel encouraged to speak and speak personally with their opinions that are informed by their own backgrounds.

I teach comparative politics, so that’s kind of easy. But—so that's good. It’s also, though, alerted me to the fact that a lot of the foreign students come from very wealthy backgrounds, and so there's been a really interesting thing where the—a lot of the Americans have fewer financial resources than the international students, so it’s kind of tipped on its head the old stereotypes about wealthy Americans and poor students from abroad. Because now, you know, we have wealthy Venezuelans, wealthy Colombians, poor kids from Medford, poor kids from Watertown and it’s interesting—

BARRETTO: It is. Yeah.

DUSHKU: —and it gives us a chance to talk about those differences and then to talk about them as case studies in the changing international political economics situation.
So, it’s actually—it’s been fun and great and I don’t take it for granted. I mean, I'm very observant and I feel very responsible for pointing trends out to students because it would be a shame to miss this dramatic shift that's going on at Suffolk because it’s such a microcosm of what's going on around the world.

**BARRETTO:** I noticed when I had the comparative politics class with you that a lot of the foreign students were very shy about speaking about their country they’re from. I thought it was interesting, you know, how they’d kind of—they’ll participate but they really keep a lot of stuff to themselves because they probably think Americans, you know, they won't understand.

**DUSHKU:** Well, how did we do in that class? I worked really hard to get them to talk. Did they?

**BARRETTO:** Yeah, some of them broke out of their shells.

**DUSHKU:** I remember inadvertently insulting the woman from northern Nigeria, the Hausa woman. And boy, she started talking. She became then a friend. But, I was talking about stereotypes in Nigeria. When I hit her group, she just thought I was accusing the Hausas of being aloof and arrogant, and boy, she took me on.

**BARRETTO:** What have been some of the countries you've visited, whether for school, work, pleasure?

**DUSHKU:** Oh, I've been all over the place. Which, you know, I was the dean of the Dakar Campus for two years?

**BARRETTO:** Yeah.

**DUSHKU:** So that was fabulous. And we had over—we had well over a hundred students there at that time. It’s getting smaller now, but, and we had students from twenty-four countries the

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5 Suffolk University opened a campus in Dakar, Senegal in 1999. The campus was closed in 2011.
year I was there. Twenty-four African countries. There was not a single non-African, they were from twenty-four African countries. And that was interesting because the diversity issues there were intense. People were upset over who spoke English, who spoke French, what the television was going to be in.

**BARRETTTO:** Too many old vendettas?

**DUSHKU:** Yes, it was really—and what kind of food, you know? Muslims didn't want ham or this—it was amazing. So, I loved that. And then the exciting part that followed was that when I came back to Suffolk here, in the first two years I was back, the Dakar students got most of the academic awards at graduation. They were summa, magna cum laude in the business school, and the few that were in the college of arts and sciences. And I knew they were great when they were in Dakar, but they carried that on. I'm less in touch with them now because I'm no longer the dean there, so I don't know them as freshmen and sophomores. But I still occasionally meet someone who's from Dakar, and I loved that experience. I was so connected to that lovely campus and those students, that that meant a lot to me. I've probably—I've been invited to do some other things with educational institutions in Africa and, you know, I am sixty-five and I try to not act like I'm an old lady, but it's a little bit harder to get—to get myself geared up to go off for two years to Africa and start reforming and rebuilding an institution someplace than it was when I was only sixty. (laughter)

So I've been there, been to South Africa a few times, mostly as a tourist. Been to Nigeria. I was at the Women’s Conference in Kenya in 1985, been to China for the Women’s Conference there, the U.N. Conference in ‘95. I've taken study groups to twenty different countries, took study groups to Nicaragua for three years during the Sandinista period. I’m a social democrat, so I'm very interested in countries that revolt against fascist military governments, so I took students to El Salvador last year with the Moakley Center, been all over the place. I love it.

**BARRETTTO:** Yeah. What country do you think that you've been to, and you saw, was in most need of assistance, international assistance?
DUSHKU: Well, it depends on what you mean by assistance. I was in—you know, my last name is Dushku, which is an Albanian name. Now, I'm not ethnically Albanian, I'm ethnically Danish American, my ex-husband is the origin of that name. All my kids have that name, so my kids identify as kind of Albanian Americans. So, you know my daughter is in film, so she gets invited to go to Albania and Kosovo all the time. So last fall, she took my husband and I, we were in Kosovo for a week, we were in Albania for a week. We were treated incredibly well. We were taken all over the country, we met all kinds of people involved in the Kosovar Independence Movement.

And that's a very problematic issue because it was clear that the United States wanted Kosovo to break away from Yugoslavia, and I think encouraged and helped inflame the conflict between the Serbs and the Kosovars. And I don't believe in that. And the Americans called it aid to the poor Kosovars and the kind of aid was mostly military aid. And, you know, I mean, there's a lot of construction going on, too, but aid is a difficult issue because you want it to go to the right things and you don't want it to become military aid.

So, every place is so poor. El Salvador is pitifully poor. But we talk about all the aid that's going to El Salvador, and it’s all going to people who are entrepreneurs and in business, and it’s not going to people we stayed with in the villages. They still don’t have running water. You know, we have outhouses that we stayed in and poured buckets over our head out of big cisterns to take a shower. And this is, you know, more than fifteen years after the peace treaty was signed. That's outrageous, that country’s under the thumb of the United States and gets a lot of money, but it doesn't go to—there's no equitable distribution. So, you're hesitant to support aid programs when you know that the aid that you support is likely not to go to the people that need it most. So I'm very ambivalent about aid. I talk a lot about that in my classes.

BARRETTO: Professor, I'm just going to stop the tape real quick just to switch the sides.

(pause in recording)
BARRETTTO: Okay, and we're back. I know, you know, international awareness is improving with the internet and new media, but why do you think many Americans are still unaware or possibly uninterested in international issues?

DUSHKU: Because even though the internet and other media are available, which they definitely are, and if people are pointed towards those other sources, they could get them in a heartbeat. But what flips up on your television mainstream channels is the same old crap. And it’s not informing, informative, it’s not helpful. And in fact, it perpetuates the worst disinformation I think there is out there. So, I feel like it’s an ongoing battle against the news. I mean, that is sad.

BARRETTTO: Seems like most major news outlets have an agenda now.

DUSHKU: Right, and I got—because I was just saying my family and I had been to Kosovo and Albania, I got a text message from my daughter. She was in an airport, she’s sending me all these messages about Serb attacks on the U.S. embassy in Belgrade this morning. And we've talked endlessly about how the Serbs have been vilified and you'd think there wasn't a single decent Serbian person in the world. And that's not true, and we've talked about how that's a distortion of who are good guys and who are bad guys and all that stuff.

But she’s got her Blackberry and she's downloading all kinds of news sources sitting in an airport, and the only she can find is, “Serbs attack an American embassy,” and they're warned that if Americans are harmed, Serbia will be held responsible. And that just distorts a lot about what's going on this week over the Kosovar independence thing.

And then last week, I was so furious. I teach a course on the Caribbean and when Fidel [Castro] stepped down, the students said, Well, aren’t you going to talk about Fidel? And I gave them two or three links to Oliver Stone’s interview with Fidel Castro in 2002 and there are some wonderful things that have been on PBS and also on British and Australian television over the past ten years about Fidel that are very, very balanced. But, of course, a lot of them have a lot that's positive about Castro.
So, after we had this discussion in class, I went home, clicked on to MSN or something, but, you know, news of the day, and the Wall Street Journal advertises that, all over the world, people are reacting to Fidel’s resignation from the Cuban presidency. “Click here for views from all over the world about the future in Cuba.” So I clicked, and there were eight articles and they said absolutely the same stuff. You know, he’s horrible, there are political prisoners, we won’t deal with Cuba until they change.

(knock at the door)

(pause in recording)

BARRETT: Okay, and we are restarting the interview in a new room. We were discussing the old media about Castro.

DUSHKU: Yes. So, the next day I came to class and people said, Well, I really had to look hard for any alternative views on Castro because it’s true, there were hundreds of articles, but most of them had the same information. So, you really had to know how to look on AlterNet or Z Mag or some of the other places, or foreign news sources. If you looked on the Irish News or Guardian in the U.K. or some of the Australian sources, there was much more variety of news.

And then Obama, of course, said in a debate, “I would not put conditions on meeting Raoul Castro if I was elected president,” which was very refreshing. But if you’d just been reading the mainstream news, you’d think, Oh, what a horrible candidate. He’s going to meet with Raoul? I mean, Raoul’s still going to keep those horrible political prisoners. And I'm thinking, Prisoners? I mean, how many do you suppose there are if you compare them to Egypt and all these other places that are our big allies? Anyway, it’s just frustrating and you feel like you're always kind of shoveling—I don't want to use too gross of an analogy, but you're always just sort of pushing back the tide, you know?
BARRETTO: Yeah. All right, Joe Moakley?

DUSHKU: I love him.

BARRETTO: Did you ever—

DUSHKU: Isn’t he the best?

BARRETTO: Did you get to meet him?

DUSHKU: Well, I remember being at rallies where he was, and I just—I wasn't aware enough of how fabulous he was when he was still alive. It was really as he—well, I was, when he was old and still alive. But I have come to appreciate him even more now that I've spent some time in the archives and I've seen and studied him more and I've met people that knew him and this trip to El Salvador was beautiful, to see him in action on some of the films that were taken by Salvadorans and hear people talk about him, these villages, they were—

BARRETTO: They still remember him.

DUSHKU: Just amazing.

BARRETTO: Yeah.

DUSHKU: So kind of a hero.

BARRETTO: Did he influence your work with the international community somewhat?

DUSHKU: Yes. I mean, I think that, for one thing, he’s a testimony to the fact that people who have backgrounds that are not intellectualist, that are not left wing, that are not ideological, can

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be drawn into a sympathetic position to people, out of their basic humanity. I mean, he went to
El Salvador. He was a “bread and butter,” mainstream Democrat. He went to El Salvador, not
expecting to be against the U.S. ally government. And when he went there, it was just like, Are
you kidding me? These people are doing horrible things. And they kill nuns, they kill priests,
they kill children. We have to put a stop to this—we're giving them aid. And someone who
comes from that background and made that leap to the side of the disenfranchised or
disadvantaged, it’s a great lesson.

BARRETT: It is. Did you ever think that you would stay at Suffolk all these many years?

DUSHKU: No, never did. But I've never regretted it. And I think it’s because it’s small enough
that—it's interesting. I hear people talk about, Oh, the bureaucracy. I'm thinking, What
bureaucracy? Because I've been here long enough that to me it seems like it's one of the least
bureaucratic large organizations you can be in and you can really find a way to get things done
by getting to know people who are your allies moving through their, I think, rather
uncomplicated channels.

I feel like I've been able to do so many things I wanted to do here that I couldn't have done at a
big university like Northeastern or something. I've just loved it.

BARRETT: That's fantastic. You must have hundreds of memories, but is there maybe your
most memorable time period here?

DUSHKU: I think the sixties.

BARRETT: The sixties?

7 Starting in 1983, Congressman Moakley introduced legislation to protect Salvadorans in the U.S. using the
“Extended Voluntary Departure” provision that allowed a temporary stay of deportation and work authorization.
Moakley was finally able to pass legislation that granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Salvadorans in the
Immigration Act of 1990 (PL. 101-649). Also, in December of 1989, Speaker of the House Thomas S. Foley
appointed Moakley as chairman of a committee to investigate violence in El Salvador, specifically the November
16, 1989, murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America in
San Salvador.
DUSHKU: Because personally, it was such a time of change for me and it happened here. Also, the seventies, though, because I was a—I have four children that I have, biological children. Now, I'm married to my second husband and he has four children and we have two children, we have two others that are sort of orphan adults in our lives that we've kind of been surrogate parents for, so all together we have ten. But I have four children that I actually, you know, got pregnant with and had here. And the first one was born in 1973, so I was well established at Suffolk. But if you can believe it, there was no maternity leave, nor did I expect there to be. So, when I got pregnant, I went to the dean and I went to the president and other people and said, “I don’t want to lose my job, but I’d like, you know, to take six or eight months off and come back and teach.” Oh, I'm sure we can do that for you. That sounds like a great idea. And they were very excited that I was having a baby. There was no negative, punitive attitude.

But do you know that I paid my own substitute out of my salary for taking my courses during the semester I took off when I had my first child in 1973? Because it never occurred to me that I had a right to a paid maternity leave. Now, my second child was born in ’76, so between ’73 and ’76, in those three years, it had become a big issue in America. Everybody was expected to get maternity leave if they were employed. And so when I had my second child, who was also born in the spring, so it was the spring semester, I had a paid maternity leave, took the semester off, and didn't come back until the following fall, and Suffolk paid a person to come in and teach my courses.

So, that was dramatic. I mean, there were dramatic things happening in the women’s movement. And again, I lived through them right here at Suffolk. And we used to have meetings of women and we talked about daycare and maternity leave and promotions and you know, I had arguments with my early department chairs about whether I should be promoted because I was a woman. And now, you’d never hear those things. It’s just not something—so, that—those two, I guess the war, the women’s movement, and going to Dakar, I think those are just—

BARRETTO: Amazing experiences?

DUSHKU: Yeah.
BARRETTO: What advice would you give anyone who’s interested in teaching, whether it’s government, politics, history?

DUSHKU: I don't know, I think there's value in people being different from one another. So, I would not want to say, you know, be like me. I teach very much out of my own ideological persuasion because I think it’s a minority view. I'm a social democrat, so I teach that and I let my students know that's where I'm coming from. Other people prefer a more neutral—you know, I—there's this side, there's this side, there's this side and this side, you can take your choice. And I think it’s good that in our department, we have all kinds of different approaches. And I'm very close to—we have some fabulous junior faculty and we talk about it and basically all agree, we don’t want to be alike. We want students to have not only different courses with different subject matter, but different professors with different approaches to the teaching process.

BARRETTO: Great.

DUSHKU: I don’t have advice.

BARRETTO: Is there anything else you’d like to add before we conclude this interview?

DUSHKU: Oh, there's so much more about Suffolk itself, that's been interesting, but I think in terms of my personal life experience here, I think those are the high points.

BARRETTO: Great. Thank you so much for doing this interview, Professor Dushku.

DUSHKU: Oh, I love it. I love Suffolk. (laughter)

BARRETTO: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW