

## Honoring Lesbian-Queer Archiving: Online-Talk with Joan Nestle\_official part (March 5, 2022, 11 am/Berlin)

**Lara Ledwa:** [00:00:02] So ok I guess everybody is coming in now. We already got the chance to chat a little bit and are very excited to start the talk. But we just said we will wait like 2 to 3 minutes to that so that everybody can get in and make themselves comfortable. And yeah, I see the number is rising. So they were actually like only registered via like my email were like 80 people. So I don't know Mel and Joan, maybe there are coming more from your site also, but it's really great.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:00:42] 80 is wonderful. I think ten is wonderful. Yes. For people to interrupt their lives at this time. Yes. I'm just.

**Lara Ledwa:** [00:01:03] So I would wait like one to two more minutes. So what do you think? Should we start?

**Joan Nestle:** [00:01:32] I'm ready whenever it's good.

**Melissa Connelly:** [00:01:34] Yeah, I'm ready.

**Lara Ledwa:** [00:01:36] Okay, so I will just do a quick start and yeah. A warm welcome to all of you. Like to the ones on the panel today and also to the audience. And I'm Lara from the Spinnboden Lesbian Archive. And I've organized this event and I'm so excited, happy and grateful that we are gathered here today for this honoring of lesbian and queer archiving. Joan Nestle, thank you so much for making this happen and for responding so kindly to my Facebook message many months ago, and also for inviting Melissa Connelly of the Lesbian Herstory Archives to join us. And Joan, I discovered your writings like many years ago, and I was quite touched by it and still am, especially of the way you were writing about butch and femme realities and lives. And yeah, since I've been working at the Spinnboden Archive, now I'm like associated for five years. I always wanted to reactivate the contact to the Lesbian Herstory Archives. And yeah, Joan, you are such an important part of it. And Melissa, you are also there today. So this is all now coming together and I'm just so happy. So thank you so much for that. And yeah, before we introduce the panel in more detail, I just wanted to give the audience an overview of what is happening today. So we will have like a talk for 60

minutes, around 60 minutes, and afterwards there will be room for you, the audience also, of course, to ask your questions or share your thoughts. And you can do that via the chat. Or I can also put you then on the video so that we can also see you, which is nice, but you don't have to do that. But yeah, if questions come up during the talk, maybe you can write them down for later. And if you have any technical problems, please just write in the chat and I will take care of it. We will also record this moment of lesbian and dyke herstory, and I'm so, so grateful and honoured. And now I would like to hand over to Franziska Rauchut, Franziska has been associated with the Spinnboden also for many years already, and organized several events for us. And currently she hosts the event series „Seven Questions to Queer Feminist Theorists“, where she presents and discusses the work of great theorists in an understandable way, which is really successful so far, I guess, and a really nice idea of you. And yeah, now you are the scientific co-ordinator of the Digital German Women's Archive. And Franziska, thank you so much for moderating. And with that I would hand it over to you.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:04:40] Yeah, thank you very much, Lara. A warm welcome to all of you from my side as well. I'm very glad that we are able to enter into conversation with Joan, Joan Nestle, today about lesbian queer archiving and also about her lifelong theorizing and activism. We will speak slowly and simply. So that everyone can follow us today. And before that, let me thank the network „Archive von unten“, „Archives from below“. This event is funded and supported by them by the Network „Archive von unten“. It's a network of movement archives, of grassroot archives in Germany. And although we ask Joan very much to accept a fee, she insisted on passing it on. And Spinnboden Lesbian Archive and her decided to donate her fee to the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which I think is a perfect place actually. Okay. So let's start and I'd like to start by introducing our discussants today. In the first place and in the center of everything there's Joan Nestle. Joan is the co-founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York and also a long time patron of the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, where she lives right at the moment. She is now with us from Melbourne, Australia. And she has, she was an activist all her life. She's, she still is. And after the Stonewall riots in 1969, she joined the Lesbian and Gay Liberation. And she is an often quoted author as well. Her publications are numerous. Let me just highlight three of them. „A Restricted Country“ was published in 1987, „A Fragile Union“ in 1998, and „Persistent Desire, a femme butch reader“ from 1992 is a standard work in its field. So Joan actually asked

us to to, yeah, to to say some sentences to the audience before I go on introducing all the other discussants, I would just hand over for this short introduction to you, Joan.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:07:20] Guten Tag und vielen Dank, dass Sie dies möglich gemacht haben. And I also need to speak something from my positioning. I speak to you from the unceded sovereign lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations and honor their elders past and present. So the geographies of history are here in language and in Geography.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:07:54] Thank you very much. That was beautiful. Thank you also for the German greetings, it was perfect, actually. Yes. Joan is accompanied today by Melissa Connelly. Melissa is an art historian. She's a poet and an archivist. And as a coordinator of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, she is an expert on the photo collection there, cataloguing and creating collections of lesbian lives and activism. And she is an MFA candidate. She is a teaching fellow right now for poetry writing at Columbia University. Lara Ledwa is an art historian as well and a gender scientist. She is interested in making historical knowledge about marginalized political and social struggles accessible, paying tribute to the feminist, lesbian, queer and anticapitalist Resistance. And at Spinnboden Archive she's responsible for the event management and public relations. And many thanks, Lara, for organizing this talk today together with the Spinnboden Team. Last but not least, Katja Koblitz is the managing director of the Spinnboden Lesbian Archive here in Berlin. Katja is an historian and published variously on women, lesbian and trans history and participated in several feminist and queer exhibitions, at Spinnboden she is responsible for finances and for the archives. And Katja, I would like to give you the word before we start our talk.

**Katja Koblitz:** [00:09:38] Yes. Thank you very much. A very, very, very warm welcome also from my side, I am very happy to welcome Joan Nestle and Melissa Connelly to the talk. We will soon be writing not only the feminist day of struggle all over the world, but also the day of archives in Germany today. Today is the day of archives in Germany. And what could be better that our two archives today set a queer feminist accent. So, thank you very much. And now the stage is set for the talk with the two of you. Thank you.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:10:30] Thank you.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:10:32] Thank you, Katja. So just let's start, Joan. I'm very interested in various aspects of your life, your work, your activism. And my first question actually is a warm up question. So could you let us dive into your world and tell us who and what inspired your activism and your writing the most?

**Joan Nestle:** [00:11:04] Yes. I've been thinking about that because you kindly let me know what we, where we would be heading. And I had to I'm 82 now, 81. And I wrote down a kind of chronology about the happenings, the communities and those that gave me the light of insight in so many ways. What I want to say first is you made me think, what kind of lesbian am I? Because we know now, because our archives have the full expanse there are many ways of being a lesbian in this world, and why I gave my life to grassroots archiving. What interested me was how the body makes history, how the body can refuse history. How the where's history and through my whole life, particularly in the early years, I was always learning from what it meant to be a policed, to have a policed desire. To have a desire that led, that could lead you into exile. And that made me, it made me think of other kinds of exiles. Now I have five dates that I picked from my 81 year old life that started, so my little passion for archiving what I would call a displaced people, starts all the way at the beginning. And so here I go. So just put up. So the first date I have is 1948. The Bronx. I see a string of light blue tattooed numbers on the lower forearm of Sam, who runs the delicatessen on our corner. Regina, my mother explained. 1952. Regina takes a 12 year old daughter to the site of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. We're in March of 1911. 150 migrant women workers leapt to their death to escape the fires. And Regina says to me, „Look at the sidewalk“. All of this went into my passion. 1958. I enter the doors of the Sea Colony, which was a working class butch femme lesbian bar in Greenwich Village. 1965. I'm on the march from Selma to Montgomery as a closeted lesbian, but an out feminist. And there I saw literally history, people carrying a history on their body. African-americans bodies. Bodies bloody, bodies strong. Simply trying to get the right to vote, which sadly we have to say it's all come back. And then in 1974, LHA opened its doors and. Now, I know this is a lot of information and what I'm thinking that perhaps if people have questions, we can follow up with some more information. Let me say I'm going to leave my. What influenced me, my mother, Regina, because she was a sexual outlaw. She was, she was a criminal outlaw in some ways. And that she's part of all of my sense of what can happen when you lose a tribe. I've never wanted to be part of a tribe. I. And you can

stop me at any time. The other info. My mother was a basic. And then Miss Mabel Hampton, an African American lesbian woman who came out in the early 1900s. Who was, I mean, she said I was. „What do you mean? When did you come out? I was never in.“ Her, How can her strength of survival, of integrity, of her lesbian devoted self that was big enough to take in all the struggles of her peoples. And then violated communities of dissent because in, I enter public lesbian life in 1958 in a policed bar and at the same time by the sixties we're marching against the war. We're marching for women's reproductive rights. We're marching for gay liberation. And that sense of what it means when you look to your left and you look to your right. And there are women, queer people, putting their lives on the line. All of this informed my work, my appreciation for communities like our archival communities and that what I have to bring into this also. I was lucky enough to be active in the first international round of gay lesbian archiving in, in Canada. All this was happening and then your archives was one of the first to send us material to send LHA material to celebrate our beginning projects. So. Have I talked too much? Perhaps you should interrupt me now.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:17:31] No, actually, I don't want to interrupt you. Thank you very much for, for this, these first very, very fascinating insights and your influences, also very private influences and kind of political influences as well. And maybe you can tell me a little more, a little bit more about Mabel Hampton. I think she also played a part in the Lesbian Herstory Archives history. So maybe you can share with all the others here.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:18:02] Yes. So I met Miss Hampton, I met in the early 1960s. She worked for my mother. My mother was a working woman. So. Uh. Miss Hampton was the first lesbian I ever knew. And. She and my mother developed an unusual relationship and I think loved each other. And then Miss Hampton was part of my life ever since. And in this sense that she lived an open lesbian life in whatever way she could. And when I came out as well, well my mother thought I was a lesbian. She called Miss Hampton and said. „What shall I do? What shall I do? My daughter is a lesbian.“ We're talking like 1960, perhaps 1959, even earlier. And Miss Hampton says „Regina, What do you mean? I'm a lesbian, and it suits me fine.“ That's. But. Miss Hampton had to fight for her life from the very beginning. So at age five she was born in the South. She's brought up as an orphan at age five. She flees the family, the relatives where the uncle was, was making life sexually. She's only seven years old and she flees down the

subway and gets taken in by a family in New Jersey. And Miss Hampton goes on to be part of all the major black cultural moments of American history, starting with the Harlem Renaissance and going to see the captive, the first lesbian play and all of this, meeting her partner, her wife, as she called her, she called her her wife in 1932. Lillian Foster. And there's, we are very lucky because the wonderful Megan Rossman is now working on a film on the life of Miss Mabel Hampton. But all I can say she used to have to choose. I have to bring all my lesbian lovers to her. And she had to give them their OK. She lived with them and I at the end of her life and so we could, we could reverse the racial script in America, which was white, black women taking care of white women. Miss Hampton was. We took care of Miss Hampton at the end of her life, but and her role in the archives, she understood from the beginning she had precious libraries in her in her apartment in the Bronx. She was a multifaceted woman. So she liked. I mean, she she she read she was a member of the Rosicrucians. She was a member of the Eastern Star. She she loved opera. She was a member of the Negro Opera Company, which was considered a communist organization. And that's something I just want to go back when I'm saying about. For me, the archives is the home of the courage of dissent, whether it's the bodies dissent, communities dissent. One of the, one of the early communities of dissent was fighting was protesting the McCarthy period in America. And so to see that Miss Hampton was taking on the forces of the state, she was an air raid warden in the Second World War. But to get back to the archives, as you're saying. Joan, answer the question. Was that she collected so along with all her black cultural history. So Marion, she went when Marion Anderson Sing at the Lincoln Memorial. She she she had a collection of lesbian paperbacks because Miss Hampton, Miss Hampton was a very sexual being in the sense she she appreciated women's beauty and to the, till, she was she died when she was 88 and she was still talking about „oh, I could I could feel up“ shaking a woman's hand and saying, „Joan, Joan, I could feel it. I could feel it throughout my whole body.“ This is her sense of her Living. But so she and she'd say to me, „Joan, when is the archives going to get its brownstone?“ Which meant it's a home of its own. And she never lived to see that, but. So I don't know if I'm doing a good enough job, but you'll get to know her more. I've written a piece based on her papers that she left to the archives. Everything. The receipt for her first sewing machine. And that's what leads me to say for me, the word lesbian includes. Because we have been part of everything, but not in this way. We are everywhere. Yes, but no. This is something deeper. This is like we were talking before we opened up the conversation. What does it mean to be a lesbian during war? What does it mean? And Miss Hampton

and her courage when she said she saved everything in the belief that it would give another kind of American history. And that's what we can do with our archives. We can change how national, I'm interested in those below the national gaze, you know, and our archives, Our archives can have all the songs that are sung in the darkness. All the dreams that keep us going. It's a very special place of living where history and memory and bodies contain results.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:24:20] Yes. And as you mentioned, you wrote an essay about Mabel Hampton's life. So I just thought I could ask you a little bit more about it. And I want to introduce this essay to everyone watching us, joining us today. So you can, can read about Mabel Hampton and her role actually for Joan's life and also for the Lesbian Herstory Archives and for the lesbian movement and also for the black movement in this essay. And I am really looking forward to the film, I didn't know that Megan Rossman is also planning a film about Mabel Hampton. I'm really looking forward to it. And just let me add, because some people might know that Megan Rossman also did the movie about the Lesbian Herstory Archives, *The Archivettes*, which was screened at Spinnboden Lesbian Archive last year. So we had a discussion round also concerning this, this, this movie. And we were very touched actually also to see you in the movie and all the other great coordinators and activists also Deborah Edel and so on. That was really a pleasure. So I want to add just a short question to this to to the influences complex. Did you have some kind of because you are you are such in writing as well that you have a role model for your writing? Whom did you read? Who inspired you the most? Was it a feminist author?

**Joan Nestle:** [00:26:12] This is why I did a list. I listed the writers and this is why I say I'm a funny kind of lesbian. But my diary reminded me, remember, I came out in 1958. I was already living my fem life for almost 15 years before the beginning of what we now would call lesbian feminist culture. So part of me was formed by that and that does something else. And again, this is hard to translate, but this I have to talk about. I started teaching writing. In 1967 in a program called the SEEK s-e-e-k program. This was a program for black and Puerto Rican young people who would not be accepted into, I'd say, college. It's a university, a free university where I got my degree from. I. My sense of a a writer developed working with those students and reading, I had to re-educate myself because we were, like I said, third world, first world. Culturally centered. And so I'll just tell you, some of my most influential and I have their echoes in

my writing and they're not lesbian, but to me they are because I've read them with my lesbian self. My desire was going on at the same time. So. Frederick Douglass. The narrative of his life. And this quote. And you'll see, because this is what I was what I was looking for. So this is what Douglass says of the slave owner, "what he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved. That I most hated. Which to him was a great evil. To be carefully shunned was to me a great good to be diligently sought." And as I was teaching my students, it was all about colonization. I was hearing this with lesbian resonances because I was living my underground life in the bars at the same time. Another you. I just want to show you this. So this is his book. You can see how old it is. This is the narrative and the other book. This is by Albert Memmi. It's called „The Colonizer and the Colonized.“ And I read this back in the 1970s. But there's one line when he's describing the colonized and he says „the colonized is condemned to lose her memory.“ I changed the pronoun, but and that you see, I was going to a lesbian bar called the Sea Colony. I cannot tell you how as you as I look over my life and I can see, it was in a way it was given to me. And so let me let me just tell you. So these are the other writers, some ok, I'll just read their names. And Walt Whitman. Langston Hughes. Zora Neale Hurston. Julia de Burgos, a wonderful Puerto Rican poet. Nicholas Guillen, an African poet. Bessie Head. James Baldwin. D.H. Lawrence. Nawal El Saadawi, a feminist writer. She she died recently who wrote a short story called "There's No Place in Paradise". And it's brilliantly feminist heartbreaking story. W.H. Auden. May Swenson. Neuro Rochester. Naomi Replansky. Lorraine Hansberry. Toni Morrison. Jewelle Gomez. Mahmoud Darwish. Ann Snitowl and Marianne Saxe of Amsterdam. Now, they're not all writers, but Marianne was very important to me with the sex workers right movement. That is another of the communities I insisted the archives have. Make their lives living it so. And then just for for the archival movement, the people who really walked the early steps. Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis, who wrote a book called "Boots of Leather Slippers of Gold", Oral History of the Working Class Butch Femme Community in Buffalo, New York. And together we were doing these things. Allan Bérubé sadly died a while now. Jonathan Katz, Judy Schwartz and then all the grassroots. And this includes all of us lesbian and gay archives of the seventies and eighties. We had no money. We just had a vision. We, what I miss this is I can't hug. I can't feel your breath on me. Maybe, but. Our physical, our bodies gave each other support and. Yeah. So those I think are inspirations. And then there's one in terms of the theatre, my feminism, the first time this was when maybe even 1970, I go into an old church in New York and there's a, a new group called I“t's Okay to Be a Women's

Theatre.“ And it was women like me. Sitting on milk crates, you know, telling their life story. So, you know, of all my queernesses of being a Jew or being a fem. Which is not the same thing as being a woman. For me, it's more complicated, but. That simple statement. It's all right to be a woman to someone who comes lives through the late as and is coming to adulthood, to the late forties through the sixties. It was a huge moment. And to hear simple, simple words, telling complex lives.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:32:38] Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you so much. You mentioned now already you're being a fem. And I wanna, wanna go into this a little bit more detailed. So in Germany, you are well known as the founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, but also as an important figure during the Feminist Sex Wars of the 1980s. And your erotica focusing on the butch fem relationships. But there might also be some people out there and with us, today, who don't know your understanding of fem butch. And that's why I wanted you to just give a short explanation what you understand by this in a political way, but also in a very practical way, in a way of lived experience, maybe and also maybe have a glance on the yeah the potential of fem butch relationships for politicizing, for just opening up and yeah, maybe going also beyond the binary.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:33:49] Yes, you said it. I don't. Yes. First of all, I think if I discuss fem butch, I'm discussing desire, and I think that must never fall out of the conversation. And desire is a deeply political, it's a tender thing in a hard place. Desire. And for me. The first thing I knew I wanted was a touch. And to to get find that touch. I, I desire to be touched by a certain kind of woman, a woman who who was wouldn't be scared off by my breasts or my hips or my too muchness. I don't need. I had read *The Well of Loneliness*. I, I had walked the streets of the village. I knew just what I was looking for. Now, how that comes into being. And, you know, there's all kinds of explanations. But all I know when I entered lesbian life in the 1950s, my first time in a butch fem bar in 1958. But the way this community organized itself publicly and also privately, but it was complex. Privately was what the outside world was seeing as, ok, one is the man, one's pretending to be a man and one one is the woman. And that that doesn't that is and this is what I was fighting, because this misconception came in to the early days of lesbian feminism as well. How would I define. I would say butch fem allowed there to be different genders within one gender. There allowed there to be fluidities of power exchanges. And when I say power, I'm not talking about the kind that's bombing the

world. I'm not talking about male misuse of power. I'm talking about. And I'll sit here. Two lesbians ability to share difference. And that difference expressing itself in so many different ways. What thrilled me was the erotic competency of my butch partners. And what moved me was what I could give them. To make the world safer for them. In the sense that at that time, many times my butch partners were the ones who were thought to be a man, passed as men, or couldn't get the jobs to support themselves in the bars, as is often the case. And. I. How can I put this as a fair? There was. I wanted my body to be a gift to them. Now I know when I say these things, they'll be feminists you know. It may just sound wrong, but it wasn't. Together we created these public communities and we both run the risk of getting beat up on the streets when we left our bars together, because exactly that we've appeared as an erotic complement to each other. Not like a man and a woman, though that may be what the lack of heterosexual imagination made it. But to us what we were saying is we don't need anyone else. We have the complexity of gender and desire within our own bodies. That was a huge public statement to make in the 1950s. And then, of course, these public communities all over America and in other parts of the world, these communities of Butch Fem Women. I remember going to the Taboo Club in Amsterdam back in the seventies. I have memories, but. We laid a public basis. We laid. We laid. We laid a foundation for what was to come. So I really see the butch fem community as as an early liberation, as an early phase of gay liberation, we want to call it. And then in terms of what's happening now, in terms of the fluidity of gender, it gave us such room. To play with our bodies, to to shape our desires, I've often said. For me, gender is an act of the imagination. And I. I've written a piece called. „My fem diary.“ And I think in it was in one sexual encounter. I was a teenage boy. I was an old whore. I was a young girl. I was a femme. I was a top. I was a bottom. In this whole wonderous weekend. So I don't know if I'm answering, but I do see. It was easy for the new world and I call it and I'm a lesbian feminist. I'm a femme lesbian feminist. But it was easy for the new world to dismiss the old. And I think I learned something from that. And that's which is you can create new freedoms, faith based exiles of others. And I'm going to introduce something and I do this as a lesbian, but that is why I'm an anti occupation Jew. Whatever history has done to us, which does not excuse us doing to others. So again, and I see that. All of this. I have the. I say all of this in my lesbian. Homeless.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:40:48] Hm. Thank you so much. So, so many wise words. I'm also very impressed by your „gender is an act of imagination“ phrase. I liked that so

much right now. And yeah, I just want to want to stress that is actually a very yeah. A very important achievement of yours to building bridges, to being fair, to being open, to be always, always open, so to say to to new kinds of thinking, of living, of loving and and also that it's also an achievement of yours and your writing that you freed the the fem butch book concept of the of the accusation of being some negative heterosexual aping and that you showed us that it can be so it can be so much more and it's a place for gender queer variety and I like that very much. So thank you for this.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:42:11] My heart is at ease. I have to say, I may be melodramatic. At 81 you can be melodramatic. Or at least I am. But I had a feeling. From. I had a feeling this was a very important coming together. And I just want to say something. Melissa, who is quietly waiting, you know, I haven't been physically at the archives. Well, every day for 20 years. Melissa, is the face of our archives now and she is there and all the other wonderful women and you can go online and see. But Maxine and of course, Deborah, who co-founded the archives with me and who has stayed, stayed, stayed. And that's why that film is so wonderful. But the archives for me, even when Melissa and I were talking in our warm up sessions and we didn't always agree on things as we should not. And I said, but you know, at the archives, one of our first at home events was we had women against pornography, along with sex worker activists at the archives. There's as I say, as long as I can put object files, we can get a little. No one's history is exiled. And the sense of. First of all, things change so quickly. We were talking when we started the archives or even, you know, everybody was pretty sure what nouns meant. So we were pretty sure what the word lesbian meant and what the word woman meant and what the word man means. And. And now we're seeing. As the larger politic, perhaps unfortunately is going back to the arrogance of power of military might. But. We are seeing changes we could not have if we were stuck in certainties, which doesn't mean that we were not having principles or political credos. It just means being open to the complexities of change. And knowing when to hold the line or knowing when to be aware of the cultural exchanges that are going on. Just one other thing, because I must always thank my bar community. I must always thank the passing women, the sex workers, the women going in and out of the women's house of Detention and their partners. Because what they showed me and it's been with me is that respectability. The desire to not be. The desire to come out of so-called shadows can be a dangerous thing and has to be entered into carefully. And Langston Hughes wrote a wonderful and epic poem called Cultural Exchange called "Ask Your Momma". It was the title, but it's all

about cultural exchange and what do you give up? And I said, When I look at Melissa, I know I grew up in policed bars. I came out in policed bars. I saw police beat the bodies of butch women. I saw them feel ??? I saw my allotted amount of toilet paper I took. But what I learned in those places and I always said, I don't want, I don't have my daughters, they are all metaphorical. I don't want my daughters ever to have to go through that. But I treasure that life on the margins because on the margins so-called. And Miss Hampton shows that her margin is at the center of America's heart. But they would have seen her as a domestic worker with no sense of no place in history really. On those margins anything in my work, those margins, that my SEEK students. Anything in my work that has meaning for anyone comes from those margins, from the despised places. But I'm glad young people. And I say this and I think, oh, but the other things coming down on their heads now. But you know what I'm trying to say? I my history gave me life, and I wouldn't always wish it on anyone else.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:46:57] Yeah, exactly. So it might be a perfect time, actually, to bring the others in again. You mentioned Melissa a few times. Melissa, just come back to us and also Lara and Katja because talking about this, yeah, actually the living on the margins and it's also maybe archiving on the margins and is a very hot topic for the Lesbian Herstory Story Archives nowadays and also for the Spinnboden Lesbian Archive in Berlin. And so I want to move into this new complex of archiving now. And my first question still with you, Joan. So can you tell us a little bit more about the beginnings of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which I know actually started in your flat and your shared apartment with Deborah Edel. And you, you know, you gave the archives a home for for nearly 20 years. And maybe you can tell us a little bit about that. When was that and how did you start? And how did you yeah, how did people react to the to the collecting you did? And what were what was the resistance maybe? Did you have any problems doing this? So just give us an impression of the of the first years or maybe of the first decades of the of the Lesbian Herstory archives in New York.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:48:45] All right. We just, I want Melissa and I spoke about this, and we've set up just a little reading that we'll start with. And I'm really feeling Melissa got up so early this morning and she is. So if I may, let me just let us do this and then let Melissa speak of what the archives is to her, and then I can go back. But so Melissa and I rehearsed. Ready? I'll start by just so this is from the Archives newsletter and there's Ms. Hampton on the cover. Can you see? Anyway and this is from a piece that I had

written and Melissa was kind enough to have found it. So I'll start and then Melissa will take up. So this. „The room seems to be a collection of papers, books, stray pieces of paper, just a library. But the vision behind the room is much larger. The room is an entrance way, a portal that leads both to the past and to the future. And for me, its existence is the expression of a terrible hunger.“ Melissa.

**Melissa Connelly:** [00:50:01] „And our archives must never be for sale. It must never be housed in an institution created by those who exiled us from generational continuity. It must be accessible to all lesbian women. It must show its dedication to denying the role of racism and class operators of lesbian women. Archives must never be a dead place, a worshipping of the past, but it must show its connection to the lesbian present with the struggles and glories of each lesbian generation. We have never had the chance before to listen to full generational discussion. The archives, in the deepest sense, is a political act.“ And I guess what I can say on top of that, why I found this piece and and chose it and wanted wanted to read it is because of its focus on denying the typical power hierarchies of an institution that more more like a male oriented institution. And what I love about the archives are really is that it has a model that goes against these hierarchies where we're collective we talk to each other and it it's never stagnant. And that's something I was talking to Joan about with our meetings is every time we reenter the archive, reenter that space, it is a living present where every touch, every breath, every time you shuffle something around creates like a ripple in the memory and it has a greater effect. And I, for example, I work with the photographs and we have boxes of photographs that need to be processed. They were donated. I mean, before I knew I was a lesbian, you know, like a very long time ago. And I look through them and I find it and I'm like, I can't believe that I'm in touch with someone who was here before me. And I, you know, it's an exchange between the past and present. And I look at these images and I live vicariously through the amazing events that are used to throw with all the amazing ephemera. And then I bring it back to today and I share with the people I know what I'm learning. Everyone is like the community, the lesbian community here is always so interested in what we have. And because of COVID, unfortunately, we've had a lot of struggles with outreach and what we're able to do for the community. But even just knowing that we exist gives these women, these lesbians, so much resilience and like they just have a great interest and they know that their history matters. It's not it's just not something that's going to be put in a gutter, because we have the gutter letter in our archives, which is a letter that was thrown away because

someone did not like us as lesbians and not like a lesbian couple. And I think we can become so jaded about our history as as young women, as young lesbians who have benefited benefited a lot from the politics of our foremothers and their struggles or activism. So just to see the work firsthand that they've done and to constantly recognize is so important when it comes to the intergenerational aspect of the archive. And I work with Saskia, our photo collector, and she, we just have amazing conversations and it feels like, yeah, it feels like I hung out with her, went to the bars, whenever, we're younger, like we're just having great times. It feels like there's no no separation there. And it's, it's because there is this like shared lesbianism. It's just amazing. And I never thought that, I'm from a place where people are very conservative. I'm from Georgia, I'm from the South. And I have never in my whole life thought I would be able to enter a place like this. I thought it was an impossibility. But the archive itself is teeming with possibility and it's teeming with like chances for other women like me to feel like there is a place in this world, this very masculinist world, that feels so inescapable. But the second you enter that brownstone, it's like the world opens up like. So. And that's what I, how I approach the archive is just making it accessible and open to people who women, lesbians specifically who want to know that there is a place for them that they won't feel ostracized or marginalized. And being in the margins is not necessarily a bad thing because we have an amazing community as a result. And I wouldn't change that for the world. Yeah.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [00:55:02] Yeah. Thank you, Melissa. Thank you so much. Before I actually wanted to ask you, Joan, if you had the same concepts for the Lesbian Herstory Archives, 40, 40, actually 50 years ago as well. But before that, I just wanted to emphasize for our audience and all the people with us, joining us today that the Lesbian Herstory Archives is actually a milestone in the Lesbian History Herstory Project because it's home to the world's largest collection of materials by and about lesbians and their communities. So you can see what kind of achievement this is. And in this it has also some similarities to Spinnboden Lesbian archive because Spinnboden is Europe's largest lesbian archive. And also yeah, actually the result of so many engaged lesbians and women doing this work and and Spinnboden Lesbian Archive has also an anniversary next year in 2023. It has, it will become 50, 50 years. So congratulations on that beforehand. And I want to hand back to Joan. What Melissa is saying in all what she's experiencing and also all she's also working on right now. Does that meet with your work experiences sometime ago? And can you tell us a little bit more about the

actually, the founding time? So a little bit more about the dates and the apartment and the moving into a new building so that everyone can herself can have a picture of it.

**Joan Nestle:** [00:57:02] Yes, yes, yes. First, I just have to say, you know, intergenerationally, for your archives also, is at the center of it. It's where history is becomes living, passing the memories, going back and forth. And Melissa, I think you are 27, Melissa. Right? We said. Yeah. And I'm 81. And when I heard her speak and so when I saw your face and I. It. It was all there. It was all there. And all these exiles of age. You know. There's a passion of respect for our past that that is a bridge the most, the archives is a bridge. And Melissa now is building that bridge stronger and stronger. And yes, so. The Archives came into being. Originally, we started talking in 1973. We were a group of us, and that included Deborah. It included very different, the founding group of the archives included all the different strains of lesbianism we had. Pamela Oline since has died, who was a political lesbian for those. She never had an affair. She lived with a young man. Her, she but she defined herself politically as a lesbian. She was part. Julia Penelope Stanley. Some of you may know she went on to be a fervent lesbian separatist. We disagreed deeply about many, many things, but we worked together. Deborah came out as a lesbian feminist in the seventies. Myself a fifties femme. It was really quite an amazing thing. So we did something called the Gay Academic Union and we got tired of the men sort of talking as if we didn't exist. So we formed, you may know this, a consciousness raising group, we found we formed a little lesbian consciousness raising group within GAU, and that's the seeds of the archives. So one time we're having this meeting and Julia, who I knew at the bars, so she came out as a butch. So there was fluidity and then she became a fervent lesbian separatist. We started talking about all the lesbian culture we had already known, including those paperbacks and you know, the gossip in the bars. That was really history talk. And we put our heads together and we decided to do something. To try to do something. And I wasn't there when the name Lesbian Herstory Archives was was decided on because I'd never been in an archives in my life. The thing to remember is none of us were trained archivists. And so many people said, you can't do this, you can't do this, you don't have humidity control. And now it has to be done. It has to be done because we are losing already. By 1974, we were losing parts of our cultural creations, you know, and so so you have to dissent from the naysayers. You know, you have to. So. Okay. We we started we drew up an early letter, and the letter was to see if they can be interested in such a thing. And we sent it out to all of them. Now, you know, already in

the seventies, there were many lesbian feminist publications, and we sent to everyone we knew. And the response was, yes, yes, yes. And then it went. We had like five milk crates of materials to begin with. That's what this now four storey brownstone filled building started out with, and it went down to Tennessee with Julia and her partner. But we had one vow when we began knowing us was that the archives could never be held hostage to a relationship. Now, I don't know if you've gone through this, but in the early days of an organization, if there's like a seed group and they break up and anyway, so when they broke up, it came back and I said, This is too big a story, but. My mother had had a nervous breakdown. She'd been. She had no place to live. I managed with Deb's help, to find a lodge. This is 1972. So that's New York City's in a depression. That's on the Upper West Side, above 72nd Street. No white people wanted to live there because it's getting too close to Harlem on 92nd Street. And that's how this incredible apartment called 13 A, and I see her as a woman here as this living thing comes into my life. And it had a separate bedroom for my mother. I mean, to me, I thought this was incredible. And I just want to add one thing to my life, which is I had to start working when I was 13. That was incredibly important to me because the economics of everything is behind everything. So my lesbian self is is an economic view of of had I had to work to survive, to pay people to put food in front of me. And I will never forget that. But anyway, so there was this huge rent controlled apartment and my mother moved in and she was there for her early archival movement and she she'd come out of her room, she wouldn't have her teeth in, and she'd look around and she said, „Very good, very good“, and she'd go back and that's. Anyway, yes. Little by little, we the first thing we did as we started collecting. Deb and I would endlessly go around to used bookstores in all the states of America, but we put together a slideshow and that's what was the best organizing tool. It was cheap, the technology was easy, and every time we took it all or we took it to churches, to synagogues, to schools, to living rooms where we were not allowed to know each other's last names, to bars. And we said the first ten years of the archives would be building trust because there never been such a thing before. And and it is exactly what Melissa said. As people think it was to assure people when they came to 13 A that, yes, it was my apartment, but it was something else. It was a lesbian public space. And that was an incredible thing. And I knew it worked when somebody would come up to me and say, „Oh, do you know, do you know the women who live there who keep the toilet paper? Do you know?“ It was like it wasn't our home. It was a community's home. And it was a big enough space for that to be. So it wasn't a sacrifice. And it filled up and it filled up and filled up. And then it finally got to too big.

Things happened. But Deb and I, our relationship ended. So for 12 years, we were the face of the archives with Judith Schwartz joined us. Georgia Brooks joined us. I mean, yes. And then. Every Thursday night, we had work groups and the wonderful women of whom Melissa is now in their presence like Maxine Wolfe would come. These women, I was saying, was easy for me and I was ill at the time. I had chronic fatigue and but. I think that I'm light and work on the archives. It was right there. It was in my bedroom. It was on the way to the bathroom. It was everywhere. But these women would work during the day. Many of them lived in Brooklyn or Queens. They'd come up to 92nd Street and Broadway. We worked together and they'd go home and that to see their tiredness and their dedication. And that's what Melissa is carrying, represents and is. And so when it became clear that the archives needed more space, this incredible thing happened. We sent out a word. Another letter only 20 years later saying, this is what we've done, this we need your help now, and we raise the money to buy this brownstone in record time. We found a bank that gave us the loan to buy it. Without any hierarchy, you know, you have to as an organization and not for profit. We didn't have presidents and stuff. We were always the collective. But this bank took a risk. We paid back that loan faster than anybody than any client because that trust we talked about had been built and we got small amounts from hundreds of thousands of people. And I want to call out I mean, you must know what this when we were just beginning, when our shelves were bare to get. I'm not going to say it in the lovely way you do, but from the Spinnboden archives to get your materials, to get that message from across the seas saying „We believe in you. We'll do this together.“ And so many other reasons. You know, a 1920s literature that you shared with us, and Gudrun Schwarz the context that we made. So I think now, Melissa, I should have checked my dates because I'm trying to, I think it was in 1992 that the archives moves to Brooklyn. I think so. So with me from 74 to 92 and it moves into this empty space and we got a lesbian architect volunteered. Everybody. Women came in and painted and we did everything. And one of the touching things, we have a ladder, floor to ceiling ladder. And one of our there have been hundreds and hundreds of people, trans people, lesbian people, queer people, progressive straight people who have helped build this archives. And one is a ladder. We have Alexis Danzig, who is a volunteer. Her father was gay and died of AIDS, and she donated his ladder, his ceiling to floor ladder. So we use to this day that people can go up and take the, get the books or we have lists. Bobby Priebus, a lover of Liz Kennedy who worked in the Bethlehem Steel mills and had a hard hat and hobnob boots. She donated that to us for lesbians. Who did Factory jobs. Manual jobs and we

don't know their names. So we have the, I was giving the slide show in San Francisco and after the end and we had a Lavender Menace t shirt, this young woman comes up and she said, „Joan, I'm a lesbian stripper. I worked through college stripping. Would you take my pasties?“ And I said, „Absolutely.“ So we have her pasties, a lesbian woman's. One single paraphernalia of work. Next to the Lavender Menace T-shirt. Next to, you know who I'm going to say? Andrea Dworkin. We have the whole gamut of lesbian response and they have to live with each other in the archives. See, that doesn't mean it means it doesn't mean that you have to believe, you, it just means when you come looking for something, you will find it and you'll find its opposite. And to me, that's hope. That's hope.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:09:12] Oh, thank you so much, Joan. It's so interesting, actually, to listen to your words. And it's so precious, actually, so precious for me and I think for everyone. But I have to look at the time as well. So because time is running out a little bit, so I, I'm I don't know what to do, so but, just, you know.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:09:36] Me neither. I wanna have a pajama party.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:09:39] So maybe we can repeat this talk and then talk a little bit longer about all, all your experiences and, and, and the background knowledge. Is it right that 200 volunteers worked in building the new home in in 19, 1993 for the for the Lesbian Herstory Archives in the Limestone Building in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, New York? So quite an achievement.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:10:10] When, we're online, we have a very wonderful digital website, and this is one of Melissa's did I say it put it the the right way, Melissa? You want to talk about our you know what I'm trying to say our website?

**Melissa Connelly:** [01:10:26] Oh, yeah. Just on our website, we have an amazing digital collection. Or you can get access through our to our catalog and a list of our special collections. So what's really special to, is like you can like you can easily access them. There's a lot of great newsletters that give a good overview on the changes that the archives has gone through over time. And we have photo collections. We have spoken word collections. A lot of these collections are hosted by different universities as well, because we've worked alongside, like Pratt, for example, which is in Brooklyn, to

get some of the material online. And with that, students from that university, library science students are also involved with digitization and getting that online and making it accessible. And we're constantly in the process of scanning things and making sure that because the more you scan things, the less you can keep in the building itself, you know, so or we can kind of pare things down when things are a little digitized. So I think that's really great because things are changing so rapidly and the technology that we have brings this interconnectedness that we've clearly, we have never been able to have before. Thank goodness for Zoom and all these like things that may bring us together on an international level.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:12:02] Hmm. And could you also tell us something more about your collection focus right now and your future projects, what the Lesbian Herstory Archives do in the next years, Melissa?

**Melissa Connelly:** [01:12:14] So right now, I'm I'm still working on putting a lot of photos into albums like specifically for what I do in the photo collection. We're trying to look through different lives and make sure there's like a narrative for certain women, certain like a larger figures within the community. And then we have different people working in different, women working in different sections. So we have some people who are still scanning a bunch of our periodicals, for example, getting them online. We are doing a spoken word project. We have a lot of tapes and stuff that really need to be digitized because they're sensitive materials. Like it's very difficult to keep those in that in that form because the materials are just so fragile. And then we are also trying to expand our database, make it easier to access more searchable, standardizing everything, which is a huge impossibility with, you know, again, with how COVID has kind of slowed everything down. So we're picking up our steps again and trying to get that all together. And we're constantly reorganizing to just make the place like a welcome space. And there are different women who have been awarded like one person was for the spoken word project. She was awarded. Julia was awarded a Andrew Mellon grant, I believe, which is a fantastic way to get some funding for a huge project like that. We bought an enormous scanner, the biggest thing I've ever seen in my life. So yeah, I'm thrilled by it because we get to keep it too. So that's great. Yeah. And everyone has their own different concentrations, things that they're really good at, things that they really love. And I'm while I work with the photo collection right now, personally, I do want to, I'm a poet, so I do want to move into like that. We have a lot of

unpublished poems and it's, it would be a dream to have like a way to get this material out and publish and have it in your own hands. So that's my dream. Hopefully in the next few years we can get some things going with that. Yeah.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:14:33] Really great. Great. And have you ever been actually to Germany, Melissa?

**Melissa Connelly:** [01:14:39] I have once. Whenever I did an exchange program in France, I went to Berlin once. Yeah, with all the museums there it was, it was amazing. I definitely want to go back for sure, but if I go back, I don't think I'll leave. So yeah, that's a problem.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:14:56] You are very welcome to come back to Berlin and then you have to visit the Spinnboden Lesbian Archive and also to you, Joan. Yeah. So if you want to visit us, just come.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:15:06] I wish I could. Australia's too far away and I'm too old and it's. But this is my visit. This is my visit because Berlin, you know, it's rich history of descent. Of creation, of queerness, of courage. Yes. So I can only be with you this way, I think. And that's why. Melissa. Melissa. So if I could. You see, I was saying to Melissa. She she is the future and I'm the past. And the past has touched to me. The thing you can't. I don't know how your archive touch. I try to do it in my writing. That's what. And all my writing is archival. It's the use of memory, of touch. To make things more human. And I say that as a lesbian. You see, I mean, it's all there. So yes. No, I invest these visits like looking at your face now and I know the years of work, all of us who did it in the grass, and it's the grass roots element that's so important. I just want to answer one thing. When you said were there any problems, you know, we once got death threats in 13 A and. It was a note. There was some pornographic literature. There was a tight note that said, I hate you, female faggots, you better watch out. I'm going to destroy you. And it's signed Jack the Ripper. So it was, saw at 4:00 in the morning, so it had to be somebody in the apartment building. Anyway, all I want to say, we went to the police. Can't do anything until something bad happens. But we had a women's newspaper called Women News, and so we went public. We reprinted that letter. We told everybody what was happening. And it was like, you know, the whole community rallied. We and nothing happened but it was just a moment when all the times when there was the I was

infiltrating the women's movement, we were coming up with plans of where are we going to bury the collection and big barrels. I mean, we were always thinking of these things. And I think, Melissa, we're always struggling to raise money, but it's happening, whatever. And at some point we need another building. It's too small, even though we're just. So there's a huge change, I think, coming down the track. But you know what? Right now right now, I'm as with you all, I'm trying to look at all your faces at the same time as I can be. And my love for you. My respect of your undertaking. In such a world as this. For the generosity that's at the heart of archives. To extend memory to be as inclusive. As embracing as parcel of the hard things too. Well, one last thing, but it was very important to me at the beginning that we would be a role model archives because in the seventies, you know, oh, „we'll just have things that are saying nice things about lesbians.“ And I said, „no, no, no, because we're preparing something for the future. We're giving gifts to the future. You can't give the gift of simplicity. You can't give the gift. No, we can't make decisions.“ And so one young woman said, „but if she just would you wouldn't want to have let's say if there was a lesbian Nazi party, you wouldn't want to.“ „Yes, yes, yes.“ And there is now in America, there are lesbian fascist groups. We need to know that. So we need to document our failures or we need we need it all. When I look at your faces and. I know. If the past and the present and the future can live in one continents. It's in your faces. It's in the archives face.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:19:33] Beautiful, Joan. Thank you so much we're sending our love to you. But tell us, have you have you ever been had the chance to go to Spinnboden Lesbian archive? Maybe in Berlin? Have you ever been to Germany?

**Joan Nestle:** [01:19:47] No, I've never been to Germany.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:19:49] No. But you mentioned Gudrun Schwarz, I realized, she was one of the founders, founding figures of Spinnboden Lesbian archive. So you where there was a connection.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:20:01] Yes, I in. I think I sent it to Lara. Did I send it? Yep. There was as always, I traveled the continent 23,000 miles carrying the archives newsletter. I always have to it with me. And in one of them there's a photograph of a 1920s lesbian ball in Berlin that Gudrun had sent, and I got a little mixed up, I think Lara, she said something like, Gudrun was 84 when she mailed that to me. But, but anyway, so yes,

there were these contacts and yes. Gudrun and there was yes, there were. They were there were contacts. And I have to say. Berlin lives in my imagination for so many reasons, and the closest I got to it was Amsterdam. I've been in Amsterdam. Di(ana) made me international. New York didn't make me international. New York is so full of itself. People come to New York and I nobody in my family traveled. It wasn't until I met Diane Otto, who took me here to Australia. And since then, the lesbian communities I visited in Slovenia in Belgrade, all contested communities fighting nationalisms. Beijing, other places we've been. No, I just. I'm sorry. And Diana's from a Jewish German background. You know, they were Lutheran migrants who came in the 1840s here for religious freedom purposes. So, no, I have not been to Berlin, but I hope the spirit of Berlin lives in Europe. The old Berlin.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:22:17] Maybe I can add that we have in our archive some letters from you in the time when you worked in the lesbian herstory archives. I have this letter still in our files of correspondences, so that's quite nice. And what I appreciated is that you wrote some of this letter with your own handwriting, and even when the letters were typed, you added a few words with your own writing handwriting. This is very, very touching. So and we have also we have now have the collections from Ilse Kokula. You know her? She's still.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:23:13] Yes, I corresponded with her I think.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:23:15] Yes. Yes. She's still living. And but she gave all her collections to our archive. 200 files, a lot of boxes. And so really, really beautiful. And inside these collections are also letters from you. So we have them. So you maybe you are maybe not physically in Berlin, but you are with us. And here in Berlin, are your letters.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:23:53] Keep me with with you.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:23:54] Yes, of course.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:23:56] And now I just want to say, Melissa, remember I said this is the beginning of your journey, your international journeys. The archives will take you all around the world and you'll be meeting as many wonderful women as these. And we

can laugh when we say the word boxes. It has a meaning that nobody else will know it doesn't help with boxes and acid free folders. It's like poetry to my ears.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:24:30] Yes. Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Katja, also for sharing the information. Maybe Lara, you want to add something about the reverse connections. Does Spinnboden Lesbian Archive, does it collect anything from the Lesbian Herstory Archives? Do you know something about that?

**Lara Ledwa:** [01:24:49] Yeah. I think as Joan already said, there were like these early, really early connections between like the archive group back then. That was like not the official archive, but the Lesbian Action Center West Berlin, there was this archive group. And they also had this, this newspaper like Lesbenpresse. That's the one you sent me, Joan, which were on your first shelves. And yeah, I guess there was like, this connection also, because I went through all these early materials of the of the founding group of the archives. And there was even one letter they just sent to New York and they just wrote "To all the lesbians in New York. Can you help us? We want to have connection." And this was so lovely because it was like kind of so inconcrete. And they just sent it to several like people and organizations to put it on the walls. So to say like, „hey, we lesbians from West Berlin, we want to have contact to the US.“ And of course there were so many like references coming from the US back then and I guess were also really inspiring for the whole like movement in, in, in West Germany and West Berlin and of course also for the GDR, even though those histories remain still like more kind of unseen or not, are not so much in the light than than those stories from West Berlin and West Germany. And yeah, I just went also through your newsletters like from the LHA, so like yesterday. So I also read this piece and I was so touched because I saw the first newsletter from the, from the seventies and, and it was really lovely how you wrote this little text about like what you also said, what are the principles of our archives and everything. And I guess it's, it's really like similar to the principles of the Spinnboden archive. And I really love that this this point, you were also both like highlighting that it's really about collecting all materials by and about lesbians and that no, no, like herstory should be exiled. And I guess that's also for our future, like a really big topic to really try to reach out to get all those hidden histories and not only the histories of like all the more famous people who were like in the very prominent in the, in the movement of the seventies, eighties, nineties, but also like the the sex workers and, and the butches and fems maybe who were not part of.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:27:42] Factory workers. But, you know, I just want to say, first of all, America perhaps has had too much influence. So it's wonderful. But I learned that I had to leave New York, which to realize how provincial one could be living in New York. And when I saw what the women in Ljubljana were doing in Slovenia in a little liberated space. They had set up a lesbian press and they were in the process of translating my work. But we went to the office, this little one room, what we did with the spaces we had, you know, and there on the floor they had translated Audre Lorde, they had translated other lesbian writers. What I'm trying to say is all across the world, where there are lesbians or and I will use whatever word they want to use queer people, whatever, there are people there. They are doing this work, they are doing this work. So the important thing I think I would love to see again, an international informal group and an international network of everyone who is doing this work because they are sites of resistance. These are sites of resistance, these archives, and you'll have the National Archives telling national stories. And you know what that can be. And that's why that's our fear. If we took money from our government, we would be beholden to that government, and we couldn't do that. But never feel, you know, this. So maybe for others who are listening and other folks never feel alone. And that's how we must stay in touch with each other. So when there could be three women in Beijing collecting letters with them and we could say, we're with you and so, yeah, I think getting out from America, getting out from my I know this now because for 20 years I haven't lived in America and I can see its impact.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:30:02] I can feel every, each word you are saying. In 2019, there was a great conference here in Berlin the ALMS Conference. Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections. Queer Archives. And there were many people all over the world and we had a little table for the Spinnboden and the people were coming and we are talking a lot. And there were two persons from India and they have also a little archive and they say, okay, yeah, we have all our material under our bed. We collect, it's there and we try to save it and to give it from one generation to the next generation. So this is the starting point not only of our archiving, I think, but it's also I like the word of Melissa. Resilience. It's the starting point of our resilience, of our resistance, of our future. So because we are only giving all our knowledge, all our writing, all our experience from one generation to the other. So and but it's really important. But because no one no one is telling our stories, our herstories. So if we will not tell them, if

we won't collect them and if we won't save it for the future. So I can feel you. So there are some, some international networks. So and I can also tell you and this will be my last sentence and I will give over the word to Franziska back again. We are now creating an umbrella organization of queer archives in a, first we start for the German speaking countries. But maybe we will proceed in, I don't know.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:32:34] Send us a copy. Send Melissa a copy.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:32:37] Yes, of course I can because we we have yeah, we are starting with that and I will send you a information material to that. Yes. So, so now to I will give back the word to Franziska.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:32:54] Yeah, shut us up, Franziska.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:32:54] Yeah, I will do so. Because there are people waiting and actually I think maybe they have questions for you, Joan, and for you, Melissa, maybe also to you, Lara and Katja and I would really love to open up the discussion right now. I had one question left for you, Joan, but maybe we can discuss it later on. But I want to, I'm curious, so I just want to have a look in the chat and in the and the F&A and I want to encourage everyone just write your questions into the chat and be brave. Just let me have a look. Okay. So we have we have comments we have comments for a film about lesbian archives in the eighties and the nineties, "Not just passing through". Thank you so much for this. And then there's a comment. Saying "Thank you, Joan Nestle to have shaped myself as a 24 year old studying in Berkeley and starting reading your work. I'm 51 now and thank you, Spinnboden for your work. My heart goes out to activists activist archives. Anyway, thank you all." And then we have more "Thanks", actually. And also emphasizing that the sites of resistance phrase is so important and welcomed. And then we have also a thank from the Netherlands. So someone is watching maybe from Amsterdam, Joan. And I have a look in the F&A. How can we get a copy of the persistent desire at an affordable price?

**Joan Nestle:** [01:35:01] That's. So that under consideration. I'll try. Yes.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:35:13] Why is it so expensive right now? Because it's out of print?

**Joan Nestle:** [01:35:14] All my books are out of print. I can just tell you, you're the first. This will be the first sort of audience that Ju, that a wonderful lesbian publisher in America, Julie Enszer, who does Sinister Wisdom, is publishing a collection of my work, my two volumes, my two memoirs and other unpublished pieces in one volume. This is the first, and that will be out in the spring. And I'm so grateful that my work will be back in lesbian hands. I signed over my rights to persistent desire to the archives and it became part of Melissa may know better that is scanning digitizing our work so they actually own the copy and I'm sorry I did this for that reason I just didn't know enough. They own the copyright to persistent desire, and the understanding is that you could be able to get it in any library that's that has this. Melissa, you know what I'm talking about, that the scanning program that Maxine set up anyway it exists in libraries. The Gale Library.

**Melissa Connelly:** [01:36:36] Yeah, it's at Gale.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:36:38] Just so your library has to have that. But I'm thinking now I'm really thinking of doing something illegal. With persistent desire and getting it into the hands of anyone who wants it. But it would be would take the rest of my life, I think, just even to type it. Well, I'll see if I can get to help, because I would love just to send it out to people. That's what we did. Just send it out to people. So. Anyone wants to help me, just write to me.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:37:12] Okay [Name] you heard Joan herself speaking to you right now. Thank you so much for this. And also, maybe go to the archives and look for a copy there. That could also be a good, good way to save money. So then there's a question from [Name]. And the question is wheather can you give to collectors who have archives but who cannot be public in other countries? And also, there may be dangers ahead for our archives because of right wing forces. So it's maybe a question for you, Joan, and for Melissa as well.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:37:55] Yes. Melissa, do you want to go first?

**Melissa Connelly:** [01:38:02] I think that's a very big, daunting question, isn't it? I, I haven't had that personal experience where I've had to be afraid of collecting in another

place. But I have had the experience of living as a lesbian, as a homosexual in another place where they're not very open to it, as I mentioned previously. And I. I when I think about. Like having that secrecy. I think again, it starts with creating a network and there are always these underground activist networks that consistently exist in every city that I've ever been to, ever moved to. And it might be difficult to find, but for the for the effort, it's completely worth it to have that community. And as far as the right wing forces, especially now, thankfully, we're a little past that in the states where we were. We don't necessarily get the same kind of funding that other archives get in America, but we were afraid during the Trump era that they would pull back funding for like the National Endowment of the Arts and things like that. And so we see again and again that we just revert back to the community, the community based model. We saw that over and over thinking about like lesbian bars, for example. And in New York, we have we had a huge issue during COVID that a lot of them were closing down. We were afraid that they would be closed down. But then there is a bunch of mutual aid there. So in terms of funding that that's how a lot of these places have survived the past couple of years and the more right wing administration. And then thinking about I lost my train of thought. But yeah, just thinking thinking about alternative models and not know, I don't know. Just not giving up that hope, I think is always the most important thing there.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:40:21] It is an excellent question. And bombs are falling. No cultural institution is safe. The archives is as fragile as the history it lives in. And I think what Melissa is saying is so good in the sense of, always explore the underground possibilities. But that's another reason we must stay in touch with each other. I, Trump can get re-elected. I mean. We will have to take care of each other. And we must. The fragility of our collections. And this. It's like you were saying, the Indian women who keep their materials under the bed if we have to go back into closets, literally. We have to bury collections. If we have to smuggle things from one country to another. We must not act as an island. This is. We must be international. Because what is happening is an international calamity, whether it's climate change, like our building suffered the most severe damage in the big floods in New York. And that we're still trying to repair that. So I just to all of you, I know how incredibly important our collections are. But they will be fragile as our lives are. And we will do everything to keep them going whatever way we can. And must not stop. But. We will find new courage. We will find new places. We'll find new documents. But yes, my. If the person who wrote that question if if they would like to write to anybody more, I'll speak for myself. And also we can exchange talk. And

yes, it's very hard with the closing down. Some people just have to survive their lives, never mind their histories.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:42:38] Maybe also. Katja, Lara? You wanna answer maybe?

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:42:41] Yes. I think it's very important to have all the networking working. That's that's of course. So. And looking for alternatives. Maybe I knew about left wing archives who look, where can we put our material if it's necessary, in private flats, for example. So and another aspect is or to other aspects. I'm sorry. Don't stop collecting. Don't stop collecting. Collect as hard as you can, because it's necessary for future for the future generations to have the material. So don't stop it. Don't be pressured by right groups or something like that or by the public opinion and so on. Collect it, be proud on it, so you will find ways to give it to the generations. A third aspect is make copies and put these copies to archives you are close to. You are you are working together so yeah. So that maybe some of the material for example of the feminist movement of the first feminist movement in Germany has survived in Amsterdam because they have the material there. We have it no longer in Germany, but it is in Amsterdam. So give copies of the material to other archives if possible, if you have the money. So yeah, yes.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:44:48] Absolutely.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:44:48] Very good. Very good.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:44:49] And of course inform the public, all the politicians, the public spheres about all the "Anfeindungen". I'm sorry. Also yeah. So for example, here Spinnboden. We have here in Germany a right wing party called Alternative for Germany Alternative für Deutschland. And they asked what is Spinnboden doing. And we made this public, we, we just shake their institution and say yeah well this may be a danger for us but we have it in mind. We look at it so and we share it with other to support us.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:45:39] And make sure you share it with the LHA, ok?

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:45:44] Yes.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:45:44] As well. Yeah, very good.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:45:47] These forces are international. But what you said is so because I can go over into the drama, don't stop collecting, don't stop involving more women in in the belief that their lives need to be remembered because that itself is life giving.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:46:08] So we have far more questions and maybe we can switch to short answers then, because time is running out a little bit. So that's a question from Ursula in Berlin, Germany. We started as lesbian archives. Why call it queer now? Will this make us invisible again? And I didn't hear that that the word queer was mentioned actually concerning the archives. It's the Lesbian Archive in Berlin, and also it's Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York. But maybe, Joan, you want to share some thoughts on this question?

**Joan Nestle:** [01:46:47] There is differing opinions to me. No, there's no, lesbians are not invisible unless we make ourselves invisible. And I've never seen such a cultural material is, I'll say in America, available in different ways. But and I so yes, I sometimes will use the word queer, lesbian, queer together because I know there are new generations and I know and to me, queer is a real word babab. So I don't see them as canceling each other out. I don't live in fear of lesbian invisibility. In fact, just the opposite. So so I don't see any problem with that.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:47:25] All right. Thank you for this statement on this. There is a question I don't know if it's concerning our talk right here. I don't think so. It's actually a general question. „Will spoken word audio archives be transcribed for deaf and hard of hearing lesbians to view?“ So it's a question actually for the archiving process I think. So maybe a question to the Lesbian Herstory archives and the Spinnboden Lesbian archive as well.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:47:53] Melissa, can you say something to that?

**Melissa Connelly:** [01:47:56] Yes, I think the person who's in the process of putting digitizing our archives, she has so much to digitize right now that I don't know if she's

gone to the second leg of it to consider the the transcription work that is involved with that. And now that we're kind of opening up again, I think she's able to maybe get an intern finally to get that done. So I'm hoping that it will be accessible for the spoken word things because I also think spoken word, I'm a poet, I need to see delineation. I love spoken word and all, but I need to see it diversified on the page just to really get the full thing. So I personally would like that as well.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:48:42] But that raises a really important issue. And this is something of someone I have can't really walk now and I couldn't come to the archives because I couldn't go up to the second story, the whole issue of disability or of making our archives and this usually is what takes lots of money, which we don't have, but there's things we can do, like the archives has a wheelchair lift and but of making our collections as translatable into different kinds of of accessible material. That is something we all have to work on.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:49:22] Mm hmm. So maybe Spinnboden Lesbian archive. Someone want to say something, Lara?

**Lara Ledwa:** [01:49:28] Yeah, I guess it's the same. I guess we really try on working. And there was also in the last year this wonderful, like, money funding thing for, like queer queer spaces in Berlin to be more accessible to disabled people. And we tried to do like some stuff. For example, our new website, we tried to make it more accessible, accessible than it was before. And of course, also we try a lots of interviews we are doing. We always try to do a transcript as well so that you also have it like accessible in written language. But yeah, it's, it's really important and we definitely need to work more on that. And it's not as accessible as it could be by now. But yeah, I guess it's like one important topic for the next years to, to work on that.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:50:23] Yeah. Thank you so much. Then the next question by Teresa [Name]. „I was wondering if, you know any private collectors of photographs and how easy it would be to connect with them?“ I think that could be a question for Melissa, but could also be a question for lesbian for the lesbian archive Spinnboden. And then again, I'm thinking, sorry, Teresa, maybe you can add something to your question, because what is it aiming at? So I'm wondering.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:51:01] Can I just say, we're going to run out of time, and I'm perfectly fine with you giving my email address. To anyone who has questions that didn't get answered if they want to address them to me. So.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:51:15] Mm hmm. Yeah. Thank you so much, Joan. That's wonderful. Great. So, Katja, you want to add something to this question? Yes.

**Katja Koblitz:** [01:51:27] Yeah, well, I think it's very difficult to come in contact with this private collectors. This is one of the first problem. So a few private collectors or photographers and so and so maybe they give some material to us. But another problem is people they may have photos, for example, visiting a bar or some place, but they made photos on their own, having there a party or something like that. And they don't think that it is important to share those photos with an archive and to give it to further generations. So when sometimes I make a tour in Berlin about lesbian feminist history, and then I ask the people, Yeah, have you been in this bookshop or in this bar and so on? They say, Yes, yes, I had there my 50th anniversary and say, „Do you have photos?“ „Yes, but they are not so important.“ So yeah, well, be proud on it and save it for the future. Give it to an archive, don't throw them away. And so that is our problem to come to to private photo collections.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:53:00] Okay. So, Teresa, she just specified her question, so I just want to add it. „I'm a PhD student researching private collections and would like to look into private collections and femme images.“ So if anyone knows private collections, maybe you can get in touch later on with Teresa or otherwise. You know, now that you can write to Melissa, she's an expert for the photo collection at the LHA. You can also write to Lara or Katja and see if something comes out of that. So and then there's a question by Lorenz Weinberg. And Lorenz writes, "Thank you so much for this beautiful and inspiring talk. I have a question to Joan. Do you have any specific memories about writing your short story, My Woman Poppa? Because first, I love it very much. And second, this story is one of the very few texts of yours that was translated into German and was published in the lesbian magazine UkZ in 1988 and takes a very central place in my PhD thesis."

**Joan Nestle:** [01:54:04] Wow. Woe, Well, thank you. And I just have to say, translations are a writer's greatest gift and. My woman Poppa, I just have to laugh because Di. I call

her papa sometimes. And I came out as a socialist, lesbian, feminist. Everything but papa. But because. Because she has a certain kind of strength. Anyway, I'm just. But my woman poppa something I try to do in my writing which could not have happened without my life at the archives. That's the first thing I write. Like Persistent Desire came out of so many of my oral interviews. That I did for the archives and for myself because I wanted to honor my bar women. But my woman poppa. I put those words together because they were unallowable in the seventies like "my mother liked to fuck". Those juxtaposition of desire and motherhood or gender and. And women. So I'm. It was a homage. The piece is a homage. To all my lovers. Who gave me the joy of their touch. And it was during the time when I would read my writings. I look back now at 81 and I think, Wow, whew. And in a black slip. I'm a big woman in a black slip. And I always had talcum powder with me behind the scenes. When this is down in wow, this is down in the little off of Broadway theaters where we were doing things. This is what community can give you. Community can give you the courage. To bear your body. A body of knowledge. Born on the body. So the so my woman poppa was saying thank you and saying what was unallowed to speak. There were always women who walked out when I spoke, my books were not sold publicly in many women's bookstores. They were kept under the counter as pornographic. So yeah, so I'm so delighted one that it was translated and I have forgotten and maybe a copy in my papers, but I am honored by any translations. There's a French translation coming out next year of a part of it. And I've been translated into ??? And I've been translated into. With the anti-occupation peace activists I've been translated into Hebrew part, but anyway, that's going off the point. I have now. The woman who asked that question, give her my email and we can talk more because I'll refresh my mouth out. We read the piece and see if I can be more specific.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:57:14] Okay. Of course. Thank you very much, Lorenz, for your question. We can pass the email address of Joan to you and maybe there will be a lively conversation later on. I just want to add that translations are often happening by accident. So history shows us, because it's often a personal decision, not only a decision of money or selling products, but because someone loves it very much and then contacts you and then is happy to translate it or think it's worth to translate it. So the same thing is happening with Donna Haraway's work, „Staying with the Trouble“, which was then translated by Karin Harris, who was actually not a translator but a scientist, and she decided to do it on her own because no press publishing house would

do it in Germany. Yeah. But we are very happy Joan that so that quite a few actually writings of you we also can read in German but most of them we have in English and I'm looking in the F&A and I don't see any new questions. Oh, Lara, you have a question? Yes, please.

**Lara Ledwa:** [01:58:35] No, I just saw in the chat because I guess it was a little bit confusing. There was like one more question if you "Thank you for this insightful talk. Could you say something about your position on the terf wars?" So I guess this was the last.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [01:58:51] Okay. Yeah. Thank you.

**Lara Ledwa:** [01:58:54] I didn't want to miss it, so.

**Joan Nestle:** [01:58:55] No, but that is so important because you see. It is very upsetting to me. That in such a time. We are fighting there in such a virulent way. And I think I've tried to say. I can't. I come from lesbian Nothings. I come from lesbian obscenity. That's what I was. I had a doctor say to my mother in 1950, „Don't tell me your daughter is a lesbian. That's like saying she has cancer.“ I have come from when we were nothing. And I have seen. I have seen a community grow and grow and grow in strength. And we have a history. Trans people now are having a history. There must be room for all these histories because we are hated. This right that we talk about is not a fantasy anymore. It's not a made up ogre. It's happening. Our nationalisms berserk. Crazy nationalisms that will bomb a nuclear plant. And endanger a whole part of the world. We can't know. My feeling is. I have no patience for the name calling on either side. I. Feel the lesbian imagination is big enough to work. I welcome trans women. I welcome trans men, many of whom lived part of their lives as butch women. I welcome the whole new gender conversation, so maybe there'll be new ways to be men and women. And lesbian will always be there. We will keep it there. But the lesbian of the next century, I wouldn't dare to presume what they will call themselves or how it will be. But we must stop turning on each other that serves no purpose and using explosive language. I can't help but feel. And I may, this may be crazy. It's a very American thing that I think has spilled over this sense that there's not enough of history to go around. So if new group demanding their place in history, we're going to lose our place in history. No, no. We've worked too hard. That's what the archives is for. The archive

shows we're here, lesbians are here. We are not going away. Women are not disappearing as agenda, but new kinds of women are appearing. Those things can go on at the same time. It's a poverty of political imagination when we are trapped into deprivation of categories. Do you know what? When we're trapped, it has to be this way or that way, you know. So drop, I would say. Has there been anti-trans among women? Have there been anti-trans thinkers in lesbian feminists? Yes. Have there been? Have there been? You know that we mentioned the sex wars there have been all kinds of internal battles. Now I just ask for each side to think with larger hearts. To think with more inclusive imaginations. Trans women worked with the archives from its beginning. Um. We've made don't make ogress of each other.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:02:38] Thank you so much, Joan. Thank you so, so much for this really very important statement, which I think we share all sitting here and hopefully also a lot of people around us joining us today. Actually, I want to I wanted to close our today asking you what remains to be done and what are the things that should not be forgotten? I want to actually open up a little bit. I changed my mind. So I want to ask this question to the four of you, actually, to to Melissa, to Lara, to Katja and to Joan. So from a lesbian queer perspective, what remains to be done and what should not be forgotten and why? I give you a minute to think about it. I want to read out the the comment, the comment of Sabine Fuchs, who wrote to you, Joan. "Thank you so much for your touching words, Joan. As a German feminist and queer femme, I wanted to use this opportunity to thank you for all you have done for femmes and butches in particular. Your work has been an inspiration and solace for many lesbian, queer and trans femmes and butches in Germany. Reading the persistent desire was life altering for me personally in the nineties and inspired me to come out as a butch loving femme. Today, I facilitate a regular femme butch reading group at the Spinnboden archives and reading your writings from A Restricted Country and A Fragile Union has helped us to learn so much about our herstories and histories. Besides expressing our gratitude to you, I wanted to let you know that your writings are of deep meaning to femmes and butches in the German speaking countries today, and they will continue to be read and appreciated in Germany." Thank you so much, Sabine, for your words. Thank you. Really, really, really much. So. And with this, I want to give to you. So I want to start maybe with Melissa. What do you think needs to be done? What should not be forgotten?

**Melissa Connelly:** [02:04:59] I guess I'll present a little bit of a dissenting opinion turning back to the TERF war thing, I think that given my background of being in a very conservative, anti-homosexual place, we must not forget that to be gay, to be attracted to the same sex is something that the male world hates for women. And that is not something that can be left behind in the way that we think about ourselves. This is not something that has gone away over the past few decades. Magically, that we still maintain our rights today is because we continue to know these intergenerational patterns and histories and we have been resilient and driven toward progress. But that's only if we don't forget the reason why we face so much oppression, which is because our love is not taken seriously our desire is not taken seriously. So moving forward in my perspective, to be inclusive would also mean to maintain that as a consistency that I can't change who I am. I can't change reality, I can't change I, and I'm not going to change that for anybody. If that makes other people uncomfortable, that I'm not being inclusive enough to them, then that's not my problem. And I think everyone listening needs to know that that is also a vigilance that that we need because like we are a marginalized community and there are wolves in sheep's clothing everywhere and we can't hurt ourselves by being nice to everybody, too. We have to take care of ourselves as well. I want to prioritize myself and other people who feel this way. So yeah, in the future, that's what I hope to do.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:06:54] Thank you. Thank you so much, Melissa. So, Katja, you have the next one then.

**Katja Koblitz:** [02:07:01] Oh, what a big question. Yeah. Well, I think we have to. We have to collect and save and share all voices of our communities. That's a huge amount of work to do. So the second point is. I think we have to build more networks and work together to change experiences and go further with new strategies and so on. Not in not only in archiving, but also in archives. As Joan mentioned, they are not only history, they are present and future. There are politics here and now and for the future. So and we have to to work with that. So I think and we have to exchange with each other and to build strong networks that I think is very important for the future. We have only ourselves. So.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:08:33] Thank you, Katia. Thank you so much. Then, Lara. What do you think about it?

**Lara Ledwa:** [02:08:40] Yeah. I guess I have to say first that I really oppose the ideas of trans exclusionary, radical feminists. And for me, I'm always thinking about the Stonewall riots if I think about lesbian history also. And I don't know, for me, I guess what remains to be done is that we like, treasure the histories of those who were and still are marginalized in the lesbian communities and also in the queer community. So for me, it's really, really important for the future, for the present days to broaden our minds, to see who was always there, will always be there and who's always like forgotten or marginalized also within like the community. So for me, it's really important to. Yeah. To heard you speaking to Joan because you said so many really, really important things. And for me, it's always really inspiring to hear older lesbians talking also in this mindset of going beyond the binary, to have always treasured those in history who were marginalized. So I really take that on with me and try to fight for that. I guess also in Spinnboden.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:10:02] Thank you very much, Lara. Thank you so much. So, Joan, last words go to you. What remains to be done? What should not be forgotten?

**Joan Nestle:** [02:10:15] Well. I'm not. I think what one thing is all of a sudden I feel very small in the face of the question. One is that we have to keep hope alive. The hope. The desire. Is a needed thing in the world. Our desires are a needed thing in the world. I, Melissa and I don't agree on this, but my what needs to be done is to keep always find ways to keep this conversations. Well within range of each other. We need to keep our connections in the face of our disagreements, we are complex. Look at our history. Why wouldn't we be complex? Why wouldn't we be looking over our shoulders? Why wouldn't we be saying no? I always had to say, Who do we leave stranded at the border? And I'm thinking of my comrades in the butch fem bar. Remember when I went into lesbian feminism and my writing was the only way I could take them with me and they wouldn't be sneered at. So we have to. What I hope. We keep the integrity, Melissas position is based on her history. Mine is based on my history. And yet it's what we're doing now. We have to be able without trashing each other, without depleting each other. Keep examining these fears are all our fears and our dissenting positions from each other. I'm trying. Don't accept stereotypes of any age group. I think all the times of old people. Oh, they get conservative when they get old. No, no, no. Many of us. Getting more. How can I put it? Radically dissenting. Because we have seen the

foolishness. So end our stereotypes of young people that they haven't and they don't. You know, so we've got to keep finding new ways to keep thinking. But my true fear, my deepest fear is the rise of fascism again. And all our bodies will be endangered. So I think I will catch up. Networking. Which is a networking. Is a word meaning let's keep our arms open to each other. And when we need to go undercover, let us go undercover. In each other's presence. And let us, no matter how much we disagree. And I'm taking in what Lara is saying. It's very hard. It's very. And I just will say this. It is very hard. I remember growing up and every newspaper I read almost every day was a challenge to my at that time the word was gay. My gay identity. Should I be allowed to have children? Should I be allowed to teach or be allowed to serve? Or should I be allowed? You just went on and on. And now when I in the Melbourne, Melbourne newspaper open up. It's alright for religious groups to exclude trans children and parents. And I know now trans people are undergoing the same thing I saw, which every day there's a debate on whether how human they are not. And that I hope we find out we have to find a way beyond this. We have to without a sense of, oh, my God, I'm losing territory. It is the infatuation with territory. From the archives by its very nature breaks that because it gives room so you can have the transwoman who now lives as a lesbian. You can have the trans matters of butch. You can have the butch, you can have the femme, you can have the radical feminist. And I'm not taking the sting out of their words in real life. I'm not. It's hard. It's hard. And I don't know if. it's good. It's good. My time is coming to an end. You have me. I'll just say in my writings you have me. Now it goes to the next. The next voices, the next persistent desires.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:15:08] Thank you so much, Joan. Thank you. Thank you so much. Beautiful. It was really beautiful. I'm touched. I think all of us sending our love to you and we hope that you will be with us. We need you. For more than you are imagining right now. So thank you so much for your profound insights and your valuable suggestions to us. And it was really very touching and exciting talking to you today. Talking to you, Melissa, to you, Lara, to you, Katja. Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the future of a lesbian a queer a feminist vision. And I just wanted to add that there was commentary in the in the chat saying that there a people from Italy they're trying to translate your work into Italian, Joan. So this is quite encouraging I think. And then there was also a comment that lesbian and queer shall be named together. Thank you for that. And then in the end I wanted to say yes, please build networks, stand together in solidarity. Times are hard. They are changing dramatically. As we visit now in Europe,

be together and we have the day of feminist struggle, the International Women's Day quite ahead of us on the 8th of March. Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv is going to SO36 and doing a Kiez bingo. So if you want to do support them, just go there on the evening and make some money for them. But this talk also was the talk for the International Women's Day, for the feminist day or feminist struggle in Germany. So thank you so much, Joan and Melissa coming to us. Joan, at such a late time in Melbourne. Melissa at such an early time in New York, she got up at 4:00 am to today. So just imagine this. Thank you all. It was so amazing you were with us. I'm wishing you all the best from the bottom of my heart. Stay safe, stay healthy and stand in solidarity and all the best also for everyone joining us right now. So goodbye.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:17:37] Bye. Oh, no.

**Lara Ledwa:** [02:17:40] Thank you so much. Take care, all of you. And thank you.

**Katja Koblitz:** [02:17:44] You. Thank you. Thank you for all.

**Melissa Connelly:** [02:17:49] It was awesome. Such a treat. Thank you. Bye.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:17:52] Thank you, Melissa.

**Katja Koblitz:** [02:17:55] Bye. And Melissa. Come. Come to Berlin. You have a coffee here for free.

**Melissa Connelly:** [02:18:02] I'll be Right there. Yes. I'll see what I can do. Awesome. Thank you so much.

**Katja Koblitz:** [02:18:09] Bye bye. All the best. Und Lara, vielen Dank für die gute Organisation. Thanks for the good organization.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:18:16] Yeah, thank you, Lara for hosting it.

**Lara Ledwa:** [02:18:20] I'm not able. I have I when I click the button, we are all gone. So sorry.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:18:26] But this was taped, right? This was taped. Send your copy to LHA. An then Melissa can help that. And then that's another way. And you have to tell us if there's things you want from LHA that we can.

**Lara Ledwa:** [02:18:39] Everything we want everything.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:18:43] ... move in together, we will be.

**Lara Ledwa:** [02:18:47] We will be in touch, like via email and everything. And I will send you the copy. We we will now we will continue to be in contact.

**Katja Koblitz:** [02:18:54] Yes, of course.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:18:56] Yes, we will. And Be strong, Lara.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:18:59] Thank you, Lara. You can be you can be brave. I think you can be.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:19:05] You were wonderful. Yes. I want to call you Francesca, but.

**Franziska Rauchut:** [02:19:10] Oh, my mother used to call me Francesca, by the way.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:19:18] All right. I have to push the red button. I would have been asleep an hour ago and Melissa would wake up and.

**Melissa Connelly:** [02:19:25] Yeah.

**Lara Ledwa:** [02:19:26] Also lots of greetings to Diane. She was being in the background.

**Joan Nestle:** [02:19:32] She want asleep and so did [Name dog].

**all:** [02:19:36] Bye bye bye