

Oral History Center  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

The Freedom to Marry Oral History Project

Jo Deutsch

*Jo Deutsch and the Federal Campaign*

Interviews conducted by  
Martin Meeker  
in 2015

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Jo Deutsch, "Jo Deutsch and the Federal Campaign: The Freedom to Marry Oral History Project" conducted by Martin Meeker in 2015, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2017.



Jo Deutsch, circa 2011

**Jo Deutsch** served as Freedom to Marry’s Federal Director from 2011 to 2015. Deutsch was born in 1960 in Florida, where she was raised. Deutsch became active as a feminist by the time she was in high school and feminism continued to influence her in college and through her work as a lobbyist on Capitol Hill for groups such as the Association of Flight Attendants. In this interview, Deutsch describes her upbringing, education, coming out as a lesbian, and many years working in DC representing labor organizations. She joined Freedom to Marry in 2011 and worked on legislation designed to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). When DOMA was overturned by the United States Supreme Court in 2013, she turned her attention to working with the DC-based media and increasing the number of elected officials who declared their support for marriage. In this interview, she discusses all of these activities along with the campaigns “Democrats: Say I Do,” “Mayors for the Freedom to Marry,” and “Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry.”

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## Freedom to Marry Oral History Project

In the historically swift span of roughly twenty years, support for the freedom to marry for same-sex couples went from an idea a small portion of Americans agreed with to a cause supported by virtually all segments of the population. In 1996, when Gallup conducted its first poll on the question, a seemingly insurmountable 68% of Americans opposed the freedom to marry. In a historic reversal, fewer than twenty years later several polls found that over 60% of Americans had come to support the freedom to marry nationwide. The rapid increase in support mirrored the progress in securing the right to marry coast to coast. Before 2004, no state issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples. By spring 2015, thirty-seven states affirmed the freedom to marry for same-sex couples. The discriminatory federal Defense of Marriage Act, passed in 1996, denied legally married same-sex couples the federal protections and responsibilities afforded married different-sex couples—a double-standard cured when a core portion of the act was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013. Full victory came in June 2015 when, in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution’s guarantee of the fundamental right to marry applies equally to same-sex couples.

At the very center of the effort to change hearts and minds, prevail in the courts and legislatures, win at the ballot, and triumph at the Supreme Court was Freedom to Marry, the “sustained and affirmative” national campaign launched by Evan Wolfson in 2003. Freedom to Marry’s national strategy focused from the beginning on setting the stage for a nationwide victory at the Supreme Court. Working with national and state organizations and allied individuals and organizations, Freedom to Marry succeeded in building a critical mass of states where same-sex couples could marry and a critical mass of public support in favor of the freedom to marry.

This oral history project focuses on the pivotal role played by Freedom to Marry and their closest state and national organizational partners, as they drove the winning strategy and inspired, grew, and leveraged the work of a multitudinous movement.

The Oral History Center (OHC) of The Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley first engaged in conversations with Freedom to Marry in early 2015, anticipating the possible victory in the Supreme Court by June. Conversations with Freedom to Marry, represented by founder and president Evan Wolfson and chief operating officer Scott Davenport, resulted in a proposal by OHC to conduct a major oral history project documenting the work performed by, and the institutional history of, Freedom to Marry. From the beginning, all parties agreed the Freedom to Marry Oral History Project should document the specific history of Freedom to Marry placed within the larger, decades-long marriage movement. Some interviews delve back as far as the 1970s, when a few gay activists first went to court seeking the freedom to marry, and the 1980s, when Evan Wolfson wrote a path-breaking thesis on the freedom to marry, and “domestic partner” legislation first was introduced in a handful of American cities. Many interviews trace the beginnings of the modern freedom to marry movement to the 1990s. In 1993, the Supreme Court of Hawaii responded seriously to an ad hoc marriage lawsuit for the first time ever and suggested the potential validity of the lawsuit, arguing that the denial of marriage to same-sex couples might be sex discrimination. The world’s first-ever trial on the freedom to marry followed in 1996, with Wolfson as co-counsel, and culminated in the first-ever victory affirming same-sex couples’ freedom to marry. While Wolfson rallied the movement to work for

the freedom to marry, anti-gay forces in Washington, D.C. successfully enacted the so-called Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. The vast majority of the interviews, however, focus on the post-2003 era and the work specific to Freedom to Marry. Moreover, OHC and Freedom to Marry agreed that the essential work undertaken by individual and institutional partners of Freedom to Marry (such as the ACLU, GLAD, Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the Haas, Jr. Fund, and the Gill Foundation) should also be covered in the project. Once the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell* in June 2015, the proposal was accepted and work began on the project.

After an initial period of further planning and discussions regarding who should be interviewed and for roughly how long, an initial list of interviewees was drafted and agreed upon. By December 2016, 23 interviews had been completed, totaling roughly 95 hours of recordings. Interviews lasted from two hours up to fourteen hours each. All interviews were recorded on video (except for one, which was audio-only) and all were transcribed in their entirety. Draft transcripts were reviewed first by OHC staff and then given to the interviewees for their review and approval. Most interviewees made only minimal edits to their transcripts and just a few seals or deletions of sensitive information were requested. Interviewee-approved transcripts were then reviewed by former Freedom to Marry staff to ensure that no sensitive information (about personnel matters or anonymous donors, for example) was revealed inadvertently. OHC next prepared final transcripts. Approved interview transcripts along with audio/video files have been cataloged and placed on deposit with The Bancroft Library. In addition, raw audio-files and completed transcripts have been placed on deposit with the Yale University Library Manuscripts and Archives, the official repository for the Freedom to Marry organizational records.

The collected interviews tell a remarkable story of social change, the rate of which was rapid (although spanning more than four decades), and the reach profound. Historians of social justice and social movements, politics and policy, and law and jurisprudence will surely pore over the freedom to marry movement and Freedom to Marry's role in that for explanations of how and why this change occurred, and how it could happen so rapidly and completely. Future generations will ask: What explains such a profound transformation of public opinion and law, particularly in an era where opinions seem more calcified than malleable? What strategies and mechanisms, people and organizations played the most important roles in changing the minds of so many people so profoundly in the span of less than a generation? Having witnessed and participated in this change, we—our generation—had an obligation to record the thoughts, ideas, debates, actions, strategies, setbacks, and successes of this movement in the most complete, thoughtful, and serious manner possible. Alongside the archived written documents and the media of the freedom to marry movement, this oral history project preserves those personal accounts so that future generations might gain insight into the true nature of change.

Martin Meeker  
Charles B. Faulhaber Director  
Oral History Center  
The Bancroft Library

December 2016

## **Freedom to Marry Oral History Project Interviews**

Richard Carlbom, “Richard Carlbom on the Minnesota Campaign and Field Organizing at Freedom to Marry.”

Barbara Cox, “Barbara Cox on Marriage Law and the Governance of Freedom to Marry.”

Michael Crawford, “Michael Crawford on the Digital Campaign at Freedom to Marry.”

Scott Davenport, “Scott Davenport on Administration and Operations at Freedom to Marry.”

Tyler Deaton, “Tyler Deaton on the New Hampshire Campaign and Securing Republican Support for the Freedom to Marry.”

Jo Deutsch, “Jo Deutsch and the Federal Campaign.”

Sean Eldridge, “Sean Eldridge on Politics, Communications, and the Freedom to Marry.”

James Esseks, “James Esseks on the Legal Strategy, the ACLU, and LGBT Legal Organizations.”

Kate Kendell, “Kate Kendell on the Legal Strategy, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and LGBT Legal Organizations.”

Harry Knox, “Harry Knox on the Early Years of Freedom to Marry.”

Amanda McLain-Snipes, “Amanda McLain-Snipes on Bringing the Freedom to Marry to Oklahoma, Texas, and the Deep South.”

Matt McTighe, “Matt McTighe on the Marriage Campaigns in Massachusetts and Maine.”

Amy Mello, “Amy Mello and Field Organizing in Freedom to Marry.”

John Newsome, “John Newsome on And Marriage for All.”

Kevin Nix, “Kevin Nix on Media and Public Relations in the Freedom to Marry Movement.”

Bill Smith, “Bill Smith on Political Operations in the Fight to Win the Freedom to Marry.”

Marc Solomon, “Marc Solomon on Politics and Political Organizing in the Freedom to Marry Movement.”

Anne Stanback, “Anne Stanback on the Connecticut Campaign and Freedom to Marry’s Board of Directors.”

Tim Sweeney, “Tim Sweeney on Foundations and the Freedom to Marry Movement.”



Cameron Tolle, “Cameron Tolle on the Digital Campaign at Freedom to Marry.”

Thomas Wheatley, “Thomas Wheatley on Field Organizing with Freedom to Marry.”

Evan Wolfson, “Evan Wolfson on the Leadership of the Freedom to Marry Movement.”

Thalia Zepatos, “Thalia Zepatos on Research and Messaging in Freedom to Marry.”

## Interview 1: December 9, 2015

01-00:00:01

Meeker:

Today is the ninth of December, 2015. This is Martin Meeker interviewing Jo Deutsch for the Freedom to Marry Oral History Project. We're conducting this interview at the UCDC [University of California District of Columbia] campus in Washington, DC. This is interview session number one. We begin these interviews the same with every single person, and that's with you telling me your name and date and place of birth.

01-00:00:30

Deutsch:

Jo Deutsch. March 4, 1960. Miami, Florida.

01-00:00:36

Meeker:

Then the next question really just follows from that. Can you tell me a little bit about the circumstances into which you were born? Perhaps the kind of work that your parents did. I don't know if your mother worked outside of the home or not.

01-00:00:51

Deutsch:

I was number three of four. Two sisters ahead of me, and one brother behind me. My father worked in commercial refrigeration and sold ice machines to restaurants. He actually lost his business in '81, and did a series of jobs before he retired very early. My mother, as a result, although she had been a stay-at-home mom for most of the time, went back when I was in elementary school to get her master's degree and work towards her PhD in English Lit at the University of Miami. As a result of going back to the UM, she took a job as an administrator and ended up retiring at eighty-one, after forty years as the dean of freshmen at the University of Miami. She retired about three years ago. We were pretty basic middle-class family. Raised Jewish. Very progressive. Always very progressive household.

01-00:01:51

Meeker:

Progressive in the sense that you were in a Reform congregation?

01-00:01:55

Deutsch:

We were in a Reform congregation. Progressive in our politics. I joined the National Organization for Women [NOW] when I was thirteen. My mother went with me, so we became very radical feminists, very early, together. We were always very left of center in our politics and in our activities. We were very active with NOW.

01-00:02:16

Meeker:

So, 1960. This is 1973. How does a thirteen-year-old become politicized in that way?

01-00:02:22

Deutsch:

I'm not sure, and I've been asked before. I don't know what the trigger was, but there was something clearly that, at thirteen years old, I understood the feminist movement. There was a book that came out about then from one of

the first presidents of NOW that was geared for teenage girls that I read. It obviously was inspiring to me at that point, and I became a very active NOW member very young. Stayed in Miami until I left for college. Went to Smith College in Massachusetts, and then returned to Miami in 1982—one of my sisters was very ill—to help my parents with her care. Then eventually came to Washington, DC about two years later to get my master's at GW [The George Washington University]. That's when I moved to Washington.

01-00:03:13

Meeker:

Tell me about your Smith College experience. Why was it that you chose that particular college? I know it was, and is, an all-women's college.

01-00:03:22

Deutsch:

My father and I had gone on about a seven-college tour when I was trying to decide. When I walked on to Smith's campus, I knew instantly that that was where I wanted to go, and actually told him to cancel the rest of the trip, because I just knew that that was going to be home. I was right at that moment, and I was right for the four years. It was a wonderful place for a woman to learn, to grow, for a feminist to live. I now actually serve on the Alumni Board. I'm very active with Smith College. It was perfect for the entire four years, and is perfect now as an alum as well.

01-00:03:59

Meeker:

After joining NOW in 1973—when you were probably just beginning high school?

01-00:04:06

Deutsch:

Yes.

01-00:04:08

Meeker:

Up until the point of going to Smith, did that remain a constant in your life?

01-00:04:14

Deutsch:

Yes. It remained a constant in my life until even after I graduated from college. I would spend summers doing work back in Miami as an activist. The women of that chapter that I was very active in became my very closest friends, one of whom ended up being my wife a million years later. So it was family to me, and a major part of my life. It wasn't until I moved up here that I broke and started doing other things. My sisters had also both left Miami for college, so it was just this logical thing to go somewhere else. Smith, obviously, had a very strong women's background. It worked in the transition of leaving home and leaving NOW, my chapter of NOW, and moving to Massachusetts.

01-00:05:05

Meeker:

In those early years when you're participating in NOW, were you primarily interested in specific issues that they were aligned with you, or was there just kind of a broader sense of women's empowerment and women's achievement that you were gravitating toward?

01-00:05:24

Deutsch:

Still a lot of women's achievement and power, but that was during the Equal Rights Amendment fight, so all of our energy was really for trying to pass the ERA in Florida. We were one of the states that hadn't. We were one of the states that could take it over the top and finally move it back into Congress, and we were one of the states that failed in the end, and we didn't do it in Florida. Almost all of the activity, all of the activist activities that we did, were all generated around the ERA, equal pay, the issues that really were affecting—not that they don't affect women now—but that were much more vocal in the 1970s.

01-00:06:04

Meeker:

When you're engaged in this work in high school, I'm wondering, were some of your female friends also engaged? Did you have a presence on your high school campus as a feminist? What did that mean?

01-00:06:18

Deutsch:

I'm going to take it back to junior high. No, it was high school. In high school, probably in tenth grade, I decided that we needed a women's feminist organization, and actually got approval to do that. At my very first meeting, my two closest friends showed up, and that was it, and that was the last meeting. So the friendships and the activism were really through mostly older women, or college-aged women. There were a lot of University of Miami medical students who were very active in that chapter. But my friends from high school were pretty minimal. One of my closest friends, who did come to that meeting, actually is a very well-known photographer now, and out, also in Massachusetts, although we didn't know at the time that we were gay. I would say I was a smart girl, and so I had friends, but I wasn't a cheerleader, I wasn't in any of the cliques. The closest smart friends made fun, in a very loving way, and tried to understand my political activism. If you looked at my yearbook, what people wrote in the yearbook, it was clear—I was an anomaly. But I knew I was doing the right thing, so it didn't really matter.

01-00:07:38

Meeker:

Among smart kids, each of them usually has their own thing, if you will. Was this kind of your *thing*, and that was still, therefore, acceptable, because they probably had their own things?

01-00:07:52

Deutsch:

I'm trying to think if there were any other things, but that was really the main activity. I was also in many honor societies. I was the editor of the school newspaper. So there were a lot of inside Miami Killian High School activities, but my outside activities were really all focused on the feminist movement, and with NOW.

01-00:08:17

Meeker:

What year did you graduate high school, then?

01-00:08:19

Deutsch:

Seventy-eight.

01-00:08:20

Meeker:

Seventy-eight. This obviously would have been just the time that Anita Bryant is making her appearance on the scene, and not only anti-gay and lesbian, but anti-feminist as well. How aware were you of what was happening in the context?

01-00:08:38

Deutsch:

More aware than I probably would have been. My parents were season ticket holders for the Miami Dolphins. You're thinking, why would she tell this story? We actually had season tickets to the Dolphins in the row right in front of Anita Bryant and her husband. We would go to every game, and it was Anita Bryant and her husband and her best friend, whose name was Marabel Morgan. She had written a book around that time about how to please your husband. It was basically: show up at the door wrapped in Saran Wrap. They would sit behind us, and they would pray the entire game for the Dolphins to win. While these two women would loudly pray, their husbands would be screaming, "Kick them in the balls!" or whatever they were doing. My brother and I and my parents got quite a lesson on Anita Bryant and her family. I can't remember whether she actually got to talking about LGBT issues because that was so central to Miami and what she was doing then, but I was not working on those issues yet. In my fourteen, fifteen, sixteen-year-old self, it was women's issues. I knew what she was saying about women, as well as about Marabel Morgan.

01-00:09:52

Meeker:

Tell me about your time at Smith. In addition to, I guess, the culture of the place and the feeling of the place that attracted you, were you interested in pursuing a particular kind of career at that point? Did you see Smith as helping you along that path?

01-00:10:09

Deutsch:

I don't know if I thought about a career. I knew that I was politically active, and I had been. My undergraduate degree is in American Studies. More to American women's history, and focused on American women's history in the last turn of the century, the nineteenth century. So it was really social history that motivated me through my four years at Smith. I also became very good friends with two townies, who weren't Smithies, who were producing all of the feminist women's concerts. This is the time period of women's music as well, and in NOW, I actually produced a concert in Miami with Holly Near, to try to raise money for the fight for the ERA. So I became very good friends with them and did a lot of musical work to try to bring these women artists into town and do those concerts, and help do the concerts. But it wasn't something I ever thought about as a career. It was such a central part of the women's movement and the early kind of lesbian movement, was women's music, and that was a huge part of my life.

01-00:11:20

Meeker:

I'm interested, not surprisingly, in your historical studies.

[extraneous material deleted]

01-00:11:36

Deutsch:

I was so focused and so in love with the women's social history of the nineteenth century in this country that it was just—it made me happy for four years at Smith.

01-00:12:06

Meeker:

So you would have read the work that came out of that?

01-00:12:10

Deutsch:

Yes. When I started at Smith, I was actually planning to either be a doctor, or to be a marine biologist. I had taken a lot of marine biology, because I grew up in Miami. Then I took chemistry, and realized that that probably wasn't my calling, because it wasn't that much fun, and I didn't enjoy it that much, and quite frankly I didn't understand it that well. That's when I realized I should look at history instead. I sometimes regret that I didn't go on and do a PhD eventually and become a real historian and work in a museum in Washington, DC, but my path was clearly to be an activist instead.

01-00:12:48

Meeker:

There's still time.

01-00:12:49

Deutsch:

I know, and friends keep telling me that. I know. That and law school. I have one child to send to college. I'm almost done with two. So I can't do anything, like make that giant leap, yet. Unless she can get a full scholarship somewhere, but I think she's depending on me.

01-00:13:38

Meeker:

I don't know what the culture was like at Smith, but certainly being involved in women's music, most of those musicians—Holly Near and Alix Dobkin and all the others—were lesbian, right?

01-00:13:50

Deutsch:

Yes.

01-00:13:52

Meeker:

Were you coming out at this time? Were you coming to an understanding? What was your relationship with sexuality?

01-00:14:02

Deutsch:

I'm going to go backwards a little bit. The reason my mother joined me at my first NOW meeting was because she had heard that there were lesbians everywhere and she should probably go with me. Again, as a result, we both became radicalized by these amazing women who were running this organization and the work that we were doing in South Florida. A lot of my

closest friends going through high school and my first years in college in Miami were all lesbians, as were my mother's friends were all lesbians. But I was still not self-describing myself as anything at that point. Probably asexual would be a better definition. My senior year, I had my first relationship with a woman at Smith. Before that, for me, there was always a closeness and a difference in my relationships with women than it being sexual in any way. It was clear to me, obviously, at thirteen years old, that as a young girl, my connection was with women. That's partially probably why I picked Smith in the end, although I fell in love with the campus. That was the moment that I knew. Even when I left Smith, I was bisexual for many, many years until I finally settled down with the woman who eventually became my wife. Smith was, for me, an opportunity to still be centered in a community of women, to learn how strong and how brilliant women are, and to try to figure out how we move that forward in the society when that doesn't really work, necessarily. That it's still a man-run United States.

01-00:15:47  
Meeker:

You had mentioned becoming radicalized. I'm wondering if you can unpack that for me a little bit.

01-00:15:52  
Deutsch:

Actually, a word that I probably should think about a different word now, because "radicalized" has such a different meaning today.

01-00:15:59  
Meeker:

Also thinking about feminism in the 1970s. NOW might have seemed radical to your neighbors and fellow high school students, but NOW, for people who considered themselves radical feminists, was more mainstream.

01-00:16:19  
Deutsch:

My definition of "radical" would be to be centered completely in feminism and in a desire to have equality for women. To have every focus of my life be attuned to what was fair and what was unfair. Whether I was in a relationship with a man or whether I was in a relationship with a woman, I always came to the table as this very strong woman who expected to be treated in a certain way from day one. That would be my definition, I think, of radical. I've always considered myself as a solid radical feminist, and have been, obviously, for forty years now.

01-00:17:07  
Meeker:

I think, traditionally, "radical" would have kind of revolutionary implications, would be placed in contrast to a liberal perspective that was about reforming the system to better accommodate women and to move toward equality.

01-00:17:29  
Deutsch:

But in 1970, even the concept of—although we're not that much farther on this—even the concept of equal pay was a radical concept. Why did women have to get equal pay? They're going to get married; their husbands are going to make that money. Equality for women was a radical thing to say. To come

to the table with the Equal Rights Amendment. “What do you mean equal rights?” It was almost as radical as probably hearing in 1880 that a woman deserved the right to vote. Today, these things not only don’t seem very radical, but seem pretty centric. Nineteen seventy, they were still pretty radical thought. Sitting in front of Anita Bryant, if I had turned to her and said, “I support the Equal Rights Amendment. I support my lesbian sisters. I think that women should get blah, blah, blah,” that would be pretty radical thing to say to Anita Bryant, who was, in many ways, the center traditionalist thought of most people.

01-00:18:29

Meeker: She would have prayed for you.

01-00:18:31

Deutsch: Yeah, I’m sure they prayed for us anyway, because we were the Jewish family sitting in front of them.

01-00:18:39

Meeker: Let’s see. You moved back to Florida in 1982, right?

01-00:18:44

Deutsch: Exactly.

01-00:18:45

Meeker: And you continued your participation with NOW. Can you walk me through that?

01-00:18:52

Deutsch: Sure. I came back home in 1982 after I graduated from Smith. My sister was severely ill. My parents really just needed some support. So I went back home and helped with her care, and in between did a lot of very small, part-time jobs. I was a passport adjudicator with the US Passport Department. I substitute-taught. I tried to teach a man Spanish, which didn’t really go well, because I didn’t speak Spanish and he didn’t speak English, but we tried. I did a lot of jobs, and then in between, would still go to women’s music concerts and do things with NOW, and stayed connected. Then about a year after that, my mother kind of put her foot down and said, “You could stay here forever and take care of your sister. You’ve already deferred a year for graduate school. You need to go now.” So in ’84, my good friend Teresa and I—she was in between jobs—decided we would drive up to Washington together and she would find work, and we would get an apartment, and I would go to graduate school, and that’s what we did. About two months before we left, we went to the Southern Women’s Music Festival. There were a lot of women’s music festivals around the country. Women’s music was—the southern one—was relatively new, and that was the first one we went to. Over the course of that weekend, we realized that we actually were more than friends, and so we moved up as a kind of baby couple to see how it would all work out. The short story is that, thirty-three years later, we’re still together, and got married about two and a half years ago.



We moved up, Teresa found work, and I went to graduate school at GW, getting a degree in women's studies and public policy. It was a two-year program. I did that full-time, but I also worked full-time to support myself. The first year, I worked for Ellie Smeal, who had been the president of NOW during the time that I was active in the seventies, and had now her own organization, the Feminist Majority. I was doing some work with her. I had still kept this connection with NOW in a way. Then I got a fellowship for the second year with the Women's Research and Education Institute, which is a public policy program for women graduate students to work on Capitol Hill and get some experience on Capitol Hill. So I did that for a year, working for then-Congresswoman Barbara Boxer, now-Senator Barbara Boxer, doing women's issues, family issues, health care, and whatever else nobody else wanted to do. That was my opportunity, for the first time, to have some experience on Capitol Hill, and to get my feet entrenched on federal issues. So I did that up there.

01-00:22:04  
Meeker:

I'd like to hear more about those experiences, what it was like for a young female graduate student working for a young congresswoman from Marin County, working on these issues that—it sounds like issues that other people didn't want to take, which I might interpret as being issues that were—

01-00:22:24  
Deutsch:

The ones that weren't really going anywhere at that point. There were a lot of more glossy and interesting issues and bills that were moving. Those were for the more senior staff. Working the issues I did and for such a remarkable legislator was a great experience. Because it was under this fellowship, we worked a certain amount of hours a week, had projects to do during the fellowship as well, and then were also in school at the same time. So it was a really busy time period, but it was really great to go to work every day and know that my boss was never going to vote wrong, in my mind, on anything at all, and that she was always going to be saying the right thing. This is now forty years ago. Senator Boxer was really pretty new to Capitol Hill. There were a lot of young women Congressmembers up there at that point, and so it was a very empowering experience for me to be able to work for her, to really get experience on Capitol Hill, because I had none at that point at all, and it was great. I would have loved to stay on, but I had other things to do first.

01-00:23:38  
Meeker:

What kind of experiences were you getting on Capitol Hill at that point in time? What were you learning about the process of legislation being made?

01-00:23:48  
Deutsch:

Learning about the process. Because of the ERA work—but that had all been state-based. So I had spent a lot of time in Tallahassee, doing work in Tallahassee, trying to push the Equal Rights Amendment, but I had never done anything on Capitol Hill. Even the basic stuff, like where the three buildings are for the House side, and where the three buildings are on the

Senate side, and how you walk from—that was when you used to be able to walk underground - one side to the other. What was required of the work that we did, how everything had to be in—I'll keep calling her Senator Boxer, even though, at that point, she was Congresswoman Boxer—Senator Boxer's voice. This was way back before computers, so one of the things that we spent a great deal of time on as legislative assistants was responding to letters. We responded to letters by typing them on typewriters because we didn't have computers then. You would get a letter on an issue that was in your portfolio, and then you had to draft a response in Senator Boxer's voice. Then it would go to three steps, and if it got approved, then you actually would send it out. Then you'd have a template for if you got another letter on whatever that issue was. So it helped with how to define issues in less than a page, how to speak from somebody else's voice, how to write. Obviously, it improved my typing skills tremendously.

But we also, as LAs [legislative assistants], met with lobbyists. She couldn't meet with everybody, so if somebody came in and wanted to talk about childcare, I was the one who would sit with them and hear what they had to say and hear their spiel. That gave me the opportunity to learn how to lobby, from being on the other side, because I then knew what I needed to hear from them, what was helpful to me, to then respond to Senator Boxer. I would have to write up every lobbying visit for her so she would know who came in, what they wanted, and what we wanted to do next. So it ended up helping me become a better lobbyist, because I was on the other side for about a year, and met with these people on behalf of Senator Boxer.

01-00:26:06

Meeker:

Do you recall what some of those lessons would have been?

01-00:26:09

Deutsch:

Being succinct, being truthful. Telling both sides, so that you know what the opponents were saying. It taught me, from the start, that the role for me in my forty-year career as a lobbyist is an educator of staff and Congressmembers. That's what a lobbyist is. A lobbyist goes in and tells what the story is, and tells why they should do one thing or another, but make sure that they are never in a situation where they don't know the other side. They have to know the entire picture so that they can be the best advocate for you possible. That's what that experience taught me, the educational purpose of a lobbyist, not a special interest in what we have now been kind of defined as, as lobbyists, but we play a crucial role in moving legislation and issues forward, and educating people on Capitol Hill.

01-00:27:08

Meeker:

I think that that is a good point to make and to really emphasize, because when you're out of the beltway, you have sort of a media understanding of what a lobbyist is and what they do. That they're sort of always already this kind of nefarious source going into the Capitol or into the halls of government to corrupt.

01-00:27:31

Deutsch:

And schmoozing, and buying votes. Right.

01-00:27:34

Meeker:

Entertaining.

01-00:27:35

Deutsch:

I have never worked in a huge consulting firm or entity where schmoozing was an option—we never did. For me, it was going and sitting down and talking about an issue. And then becoming the person who, when that staff person gets that letter that they have to respond to, now on the computer, how do they know what to say? What's the five points that they need to make so that they have all the information at hand? That's my role as a lobbyist, to make sure that they have that information, and they have accurate and honest information.

01-00:28:10

Meeker:

The two years at GW, did you learn anything in the classroom that compared to what you were actually learning on the job?

01-00:28:20

Deutsch:

Sadly, my time at GW is really a blur. If I have regrets in life, I wouldn't have been full-time working and full-time graduate school at the same time. I didn't get the best out of either of the two worlds. For graduate school, I don't remember really anything about graduate school. I can go walk around the GW campus and have no idea if I've ever been in any of those buildings. That's really sad. I remember things that I learned. I carried on work about Victorian women. My final year—I forgot this part—my first semester of my senior year at Smith, Smith started a new program with the Smithsonian here, and offered history students the opportunity to work at different Smithsonian museums. I was assigned to American History. I got to spend a semester doing historical work at the American History Museum, and part of that internship was to do a big paper, which became a paper that I then built on for the next two years, which was on the history of the perfume industry in America, and the impact of the perfume industry on not only the environment—because we killed a ton of whales—but also on the impact of women and what the advertising looked at. I specifically looked at perfume advertising. So that piece I remember carrying on through at GW. Right after I got out of GW, someone wrote the book on the American perfume industry and I was like, oh well, somebody's already written my book what else should I do. Because of working 2 full-time activities, sadly, I don't remember a lot about my GW experience. Especially as my kids are getting older and in college—my oldest son decided to be an English Lit major, and called and said, “Is that going to be okay if I end up with English Lit?” I said, “Okay, first of all, you're talking to someone with American Studies and Women's Studies degrees. You'll get a job, and it will teach you everything you need to know. I want you to spend these four years just taking all of this in, because

you may never have another opportunity to just learn what you find totally fascinating.” That’s what both Smith and GW allowed me to do.

01-00:30:41

Meeker:

Once you graduate from GW, what’s your next step? Do you find a position that is interesting to you?

01-00:30:49

Deutsch:

The first job out was the development director for what was then called the Human Rights Campaign Fund, so HRCF. I was with HRCF for about a year. Helped establish their system for big donors, which, in some capacity, still lives, although they’ve changed the names a little bit. But I didn’t have a long and successful career at HRCF, and so within, I think it was about ten months, they decided they wanted somebody else to be running their development shop. And quite frankly, in retrospect, raising money is not what I really wanted to do. I wanted to be up on the Hill, being a lobbyist. So I left there, and then I moved to Business and Professional Women’s, Inc, which is a pretty much unknown women’s organization that focuses on professional business women, but has a very long progressive background in women’s issues. I was their government affairs director. That gave me my first taste of being able to be a lobbyist, and to go up on Capitol Hill and be a lobbyist.

01-00:32:06

Meeker:

So you registered?

01-00:32:09

Deutsch:

We didn’t have to register way back then. We could just be lobbyists. There was an ID process, but it wasn’t registering like it is now. It didn’t have the same black cloud over it as being a registered lobbyist does now. I left out, somewhere in between those two jobs, I actually got a consulting job to do work in Tallahassee again. I would fly to Tallahassee during its short session, which is January through April, every week, and I did a whole host of issues with an old NOW friend who hired me, who needed lobbying support. I did that in between, and then I did the BPW. Then, as it often happens in Washington, DC, they elected new leadership at BPW, and everybody got wiped out for the leadership to bring in new people. I thought, all right, so now we really have to find something different. I responded to a blind ad in the newspaper. All I knew, it was a labor union, and they were looking for their head lobbyist. I left the Association of Flight Attendants fourteen years later, a year after 9/11. Spent fourteen years working for a labor union that supports a predominantly women workforce, where women are treated very badly because they’re flight attendants, as compared to pilots. It really became the perfect job, to bring in all of the NOW and the feminism work, the lobbying I had then kind of had under my belt. I created the department and the PAC [political action committee], and the first year passed, with other help, the smoking ban on aircraft. It was my first huge success of lobbying—taking on the tobacco industry—and winning, which was just phenomenal.

01-00:34:12

Meeker:

I'd like to hear more about your work there. You're there for fourteen years. How do you get started in something like that? You show up on the first day. Are you presented with this kind of portfolio of work that they want you to accomplish? Did you already have a reasonably clear idea of how you might go about doing that? How do you learn to become a successful lobbyist?

01-00:34:38

Deutsch:

The tools I knew in some ways already, the skills, from watching lobbyists come in before me when I worked for Senator Boxer. I had had some Hill experience by then with BPW. I can remember my first few meetings with the flight attendants. There were, at that point, seven unions that represented flight attendants in this country. Virtually every carrier had an independent union, except the Association of Flight Attendants, which represented—I don't know how many carriers we represented at that point, maybe fifteen. I remember sitting at the first meeting of all of the affiliate other unions, and everyone using acronyms, and thinking, there is just no way I am ever going to figure out this alphabet. This is just crazy. But there were a lot of tremendous women in the room, the industry and the union. My first boss had done some lobbying, so she knew a couple people on the Hill. The major issues I think we worked on at first were all health. Flight attendants were really sick, and it wasn't just tobacco smoke. It was a whole host of issues that no one was really paying attention to.

01-00:35:53

Meeker:

For example?

01-00:35:55

Deutsch:

Highest rate of ovarian cancer, high rate of sinus infections, all kinds of cancers. A lot of that was tobacco-related. Long hours. There were no restrictions on how many hours flight attendants could work in a row, how much rest time they needed at that point. We worked on all of that. There was really no research at that point of the impact of changing of pressure and the work they were doing, and walking up and down aisles in heels twenty-four-seven, through smoking sections on airplanes. All of that had a huge physical impact on flight attendants, and so we did a lot of those issues. As years went by and the AIDS epidemic kicked in, a lot of the carriers and Congress wanted to bar gay men from being flight attendants because they were serving food on airplanes, and isn't that how you transmit HIV and AIDS? There were just a ton of really crucial issues that nobody had ever talked about for flight attendants. I surrounded myself with flight attendants and learned from them of what their lives were like, the women and men who were around me. That's how you know what's wrong and what the story is and what you need to get done. We spent a lot of time, the first year and a half, two years, on the smoking ban, and then we switched off. After we got the two-hour ban, and then we got the permanent ban, then we really started talking about air quality on aircraft, which is still a major problem for flight attendants. It has not been addressed yet.

01-00:37:32

Meeker:

When you first started taking on smoking, I assume the tobacco industry would have been a pretty strong opponent at that point in time. They guarded against any incursions on what they saw as sort of the freedom to smoke, I don't know.

01-00:37:50

Deutsch:

Yes. If we won, it would be the first major smoking ban in this country, and they knew that was going to be the snowball that went down the hill. They did everything. They didn't miss a dollar spent. But what we brought to the table—and again, this gets back to being an honest lobbyist with facts. I could bring flight attendants up there who had had massive sinus infections, or cancer, or real major problems that we could show were related to smoke. What was going in our favor in some ways is most Congressmembers fly on airplanes to get to Washington, DC, so they, too, were having this, twice a week, being in these tubes that the air was just—yes, you put all the smokers in the back of the plane, but the air is circulating, so the front of the plane is getting smoke, too. It may not be as bad as the back, but it's still really filled with carcinogens. We did not have the support of any of the carriers, vocally and verbally, because they didn't want to take it on. They didn't want to be the first one. They didn't want to be forced into something. And yet, they would quietly go up to the Hill and talk about the maintenance costs for the carrier, because the airbags wouldn't come down, because tar would close up the airbags. So they were in this constant cleaning of airplanes to chip away nicotine buildup, so that if, God forbid, there was an accident, the airbags would actually fall down and come out of the ceiling. We didn't have a lot of support, but we knew we were right. We started with a compromise for a two-hour ban. So any flight that was under two hours would be smoke-free. Then, eventually, we moved to the compromise, the last compromise, which was anything but Hawaii and Alaska, because that was just—they needed to be able to say, on the other side, it's not a total ban. Of course, within months, all of the Hawaiian airlines carriers and the Alaska flights were also smoke-free. It was also my first moment of knowing that you can't do any of this by yourself. I worked very closely with a coalition of other lobbyists that were from American Heart, American Lung, American Cancer, and other activists who also had a major role in this to play, because that's how you win something.

01-00:40:36

Meeker:

Come 2001, why did you decide to leave?

01-00:40:40

Deutsch:

On September 12, the day after September 11, I went into the office, and all of the issues that were sitting on the desk that we were working on, I put in a box, and I knew I'd probably never get back to those, at least not for a really long time. For the next year, the only thing we worked on was terrorism, flight attendants being murdered on airplanes, the results of what 9/11's impact was on aviation, and it just wore on me. It was just painfully difficult, because I

was literally going up to the Hill all the time, talking about the flight attendants who were murdered on airplanes. At that point, I decided it was time to leave. So I left the flight attendants, which in some ways will always be my favorite union of all, and the longest union I worked for. I went to AFSCME [American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees] to take on their women's department. I was hired as their associate director to do the women's work for that union, which, at that point, I think was 51 percent women membership already.

01-00:41:48  
Meeker:

This is the federal employees?

01-00:41:49  
Deutsch:

Mostly state, county and municipal employees across the country. So I went from a union that, I think when I left the flight attendants, there were less than 50,000 members or something like that, to a million-member union. It was a huge leap. I discovered after the fact that I liked the smallness of the flight attendants. I worked in the women's department for about eight months, and then there was a turnover of directors there, and I ended up going into the political department. It was never a good fit for me at AFSCME. I stayed at AFSCME for another year. My final project was amazing. I was put in charge of an independent expenditure to Get Out the Vote to engage unmarried women in the 2004 election. I managed a successful \$2.8 million campaign in less than 2 months. It was great.

01-00:43:01  
Meeker:

What year would this been? Two thousand four?

01-00:43:03  
Deutsch:

Yes.

01-00:43:03  
Meeker:

John Edwards?

01-00:43:09  
Deutsch:

No, John Kerry. That was a really amazing experience, because I hired a bunch of consultants and we had to figure out what the messaging was to get women's votes out. It was the last project, and then I knew I had to find something else. At that point, the United Food and Commercial Workers came to me, another huge union. I was the number two person in in the legislative department. I got to really go back to lobbying again, and lobbying for food issues, health care issues, immigration rights, for the membership of UFCW. So I worked for AFSCME for about three years, and then UFCW for five years.

01-00:43:59  
Meeker:

When you're engaged in these projects in these organizations, labor unions, you said there's a political department, a legislative department. I assume, by this point in time, you've got a pretty good understanding about the full range

of activity that would fall under the general rubric of lobbying or political activity. Can you give me just a broad overview of what you learned within that particular universe of things that you really needed to have developed some expertise in if you wanted to master that field?

01-00:44:38

Deutsch:

Unions are different. Organizations are different as well. Some actually do have separate legislative departments and political departments, and some are government affairs departments and do both. AFA, Flight Attendants, was a government affairs department, so I actually did a lot of PAC work for them. You had to keep up with who was running, who supported you, what was the criteria for what the endorsement would be. I set all that up at the flight attendant union. What did candidate A have to do to actually get the flight attendant money? We had a very small PAC at AFA, because flight attendants didn't make that much money. What do you do with your \$3.95 to make some impact on future votes, on future relationships on Capitol Hill? Then, at the same time, I was also doing the lobbying. I always found a way to combine those two things. People who are opposed to the work that we do as lobbyists will say, well, you're buying the vote with the PAC, and then you're going up to get a vote with it. I never saw it that way. I saw it more as building relationships so I could talk to people about what was important to the flight attendants, and helping them get elected. At AFSCME, it was two separate departments, and I was not involved at first in either the legislative or the political departments. But at UFCW, it was one department. I was mainly, almost 100 percent of the time, doing lobbying. I prefer to lobby. I prefer to be that teacher up on the Hill than the person who can analyze 7,000 races that are occurring at any given time and know what's going on. I just never had the mind to say, oh, California, District 15. That's blah, blah, blah and the race looks like blah, blah, blah—that was not as much of an interest to me as who wins, and me going up and introducing myself to them.

01-00:46:47

Meeker:

During this period of time, from the mid-nineties through the 2000s, same-sex marriage becomes a hot-button political issue. Hawaii starts to percolate in the early nineties. DOMA [Defense of Marriage Act] is passed in '96. Then, I guess, Massachusetts happens in 2004, the first state to allow gay people to marry. Are you paying attention to this at this point in time? Is this something that is of interest or concern to you personally?

01-00:47:22

Deutsch:

A couple things. Going back to the flight attendants, I was already out. At some point during my years at the flight attendants union, we had our first son. He's now twenty-five. I was always outspoken on what was fair and what was right. Teresa is actually the biological mom for our first son. AFA was not going to give me leave, because I didn't fit in any category. Even at this progressive women-centered flight attendant union, the HR department said, "If you're a father, you can get this much time. If you're a mother, you can get this much time. But you're not really either one of those." I actually had to go



through the union and fight it, and won. Won like three days before Jacob was born, so that I could take a long maternity leave and spend some time with the two of them. So I was always doing that kind of work. As the years went on, especially since we lived in Maryland, all three of my kids, at separate times, actually testified in front of committees in Annapolis on why their moms should be able to get married. There was always this intertwining of being the kind of out lesbian in labor, and being outspoken, which of course comes back to being outspoken in my NOW career, and then what my family did publicly. We were poster children for HRC, a poster family for HRC, for many years. A lot of the ads they did were my family shots. My oldest son actually did a number of events around the country for HRC, talking about his moms and why his moms should be able to get married and protect the family. That was always intertwined, although not necessarily what I was lobbying on, or what my professional work was.

01-00:49:25

Meeker:

Were you aware of Evan [Wolfson] and the work that he was doing early on?

01-00:49:29

Deutsch:

Not at all. It wasn't, I think, until I got the call about the job that I knew of Evan. I read the paper every day. We were very involved. So it's not like I didn't know what was happening out there, but I wasn't doing anything specifically on marriage until my interest in the position with Freedom to Marry.

01-00:49:53

Meeker:

Tell me about how that came about.

01-00:49:56

Deutsch:

Scott [Davenport] actually called. Scott and I, our two families go back many, many years. We were in a baby group together when our oldest two were babies, with other gay and lesbian families. Scott and his ex were very close friends of ours. Scott called and said, "We have this position. We're thinking about doing some federal work. I'm not sure if you're qualified." I said, "Scott, if you had paid attention to what I had done in now thirty years on the Hill, then you'd see I am! Let me look at the description." And it was perfect. Basically what they wanted to do since the organization was set in New York, was to get more involved in DC and start a federal program. I was the thirteenth hire, so they had Thalia [Zepatos] on board, they had Michael [Crawford] on board, and so they were beginning to do some of the website pieces. Marc [Solomon] had already just been hired. So they were really beginning to ramp up the campaign and move forward. What they wanted was somebody in Washington, DC who would really be the inside-the-beltway person, to lobby on Capitol Hill, to build coalitions in town, to make marriage a focus for the work that the LGBT community was doing. That's what the position was as federal director.

01-00:51:20  
Meeker: When you say thirteenth hire, this is in Freedom to Marry 2.0?

01-00:51:24  
Deutsch: Right.

01-00:51:26  
Meeker: And so you didn't really know much about Freedom to Marry 1.0?

01-00:51:29  
Deutsch: No.

01-00:51:30  
Meeker: Never really hit your radar?

01-00:51:30  
Deutsch: No, not at all. My interviews were with Bill and Patrick and with Sean Eldridge—

01-00:51:40  
Meeker: So Bill Smith and Patrick Guerriero?

01-00:51:43  
Deutsch: Yes. That was actually interview, I think, one and two. And then I interviewed—

01-00:51:50  
Meeker: And you said Sean Eldridge as well?

01-00:51:52  
Deutsch: Yes. Sean, at that point, still had a title with Freedom to Marry's Political Director. He was my immediate first boss. That quickly shifted to Marc Solomon came onboard. I had two interviews, I think, with Sean. Then Evan came in and I did an interview with Evan. It was more interviews for a job than I've ever had before. Then that was about the first week, probably, that Marc had come on, so Marc came down and did an interview. That was the core team for the first interviews. The description really was, at first, we need a voice in Washington, DC. Then, at that point, it was, okay, so what do we do? What are we going to do in this capacity? One of the first things we did was set up the coalition, which was the Respect for Marriage Coalition, which eventually ended up being about a hundred organizations in Washington, DC and a couple outside of DC as well. It was LGBT; it was labor unions; it was civil rights organizations. It was basically the progressive movement, all coming together, very specifically, to talk about the freedom to marry. And even more specific, to talk about the Respect for Marriage Act, which was the legislative tool that we had to overturn DOMA, and that's the piece that we were working on. There was that coalition that we built, and then we really started going up to the Hill and building cosponsor numbers, and building support on Capitol Hill for passage of the Respect for Marriage Act.

01-00:53:32

Meeker:

Can you describe the Respect for Marriage Act? I imagine it was probably a fairly short piece of legislation.

01-00:53:40

Deutsch:

It was. Basically, it was to overturn DOMA completely, and to get DOMA off the books, and to fix this piece that they had put in, kind of arbitrarily, that said the federal government is not going to respect any state marriages. That's really what was the core of the problem, but also the core of what made it possible for us to win at the end, too, because people really did begin to understand that I'm getting legally married in Massachusetts, and yet I don't get any of these federal protections; there's something wrong with that. That was part of what we were going up to the Hill and telling stories, and bringing people from Congressmembers' states to say, "I just got married here, and I came home, and this is what's happening to me and my family," and talk about it.

01-00:54:30

Meeker:

When you first started, and this was early 2011, what kind of support was on the Hill for the Respect for Marriage Act?

01-00:54:39

Deutsch:

There had been years—which I'm sure other people have talked about, too—where the LGBT community really did not think that marriage was the right next issue. So you had some conflict with people who really wanted to think about other nondiscrimination issues. I can get fired from work, I can get thrown out of my housing, and I can be thrown out of health care. And yet I had been hired to talk about marriage. And so with the incredible messaging that Freedom to Marry came up with, we could go up to the Hill and talk about the love and commitment and respect, and give examples. Before I go to that piece, the other thing we did instantly was we hired a Republican lobbyist. Clearly, if you look at my resume: labor, labor, labor, NOW, progressive, Barbara Boxer. I was not going to have an open door to most Republican offices, and we knew that to win this, we had to have this be nonpartisan and bipartisan. It was the only way that this was going to work. So we hired Kathryn Lehman, who became our Republican lobbyist. She was a consultant through our first consulting firm. We had hired a consulting firm to help us out at first, because I was a one-woman show.

01-00:55:54

Meeker:

Was that DCI?

01-00:55:55

Deutsch:

That was DCI. Kathryn and I started going up to the Hill and having conversations in Republican offices which had never had anybody come in before and talk about marriage. I mean, virtually never had anybody ever come in. What was pretty astounding to me—again, lefty liberal Democrat—is how many Republican offices, LAs or who we were meeting with, were actually out gay men. Really phenomenal to me. I would walk out of these

meetings and go, “Seriously? Another one? They’re everywhere.” That was clear that our stories and the history of us coming out was what was going to make a difference. Because virtually every single one of these Congressmembers knew someone who was gay. And not only knew someone who was gay, but someone who was really close to them, who they respected. So if you started talking about the impact in people’s lives, you could see the wheels turning in people’s minds about, this is going to impact Bob. What if Bob found somebody to get married to, and look what would happen to him. That’s what moved us much faster than any of us ever thought, but it all comes from those connections that people had.

I remember very clearly going into an office of a just right of center Congressman—we basically stayed centric for the Republican Party, but he was leaning right. We walked into his office and I sat down, and over his head was really the largest crucifix I have ever seen. Which was already, quite frankly, disturbing to me, because there is a separation of church and state, and being Jewish, I was looking at Jesus hanging on the wall, and I thought, this is just going to be a disaster of a meeting. There’s just no way we’re going to get anywhere. The first thing out of this Congressman’s mouth was how he had just come back from his best friend’s wedding to another man. It taught me instantly you couldn’t really trust your gut for anything. You had to know that every single person you were talking to was on that journey. They may be at different points of the journey, but they’re going on that journey. At no point did someone come out and say, “I support the freedom to marry,” and then a year later go, “I’m wrong. I’m going back. I don’t support the freedom to marry.” Once you move down that line on the journey, you were going to support the freedom to marry, and we just needed to help people do that. That’s what we did, me and Kathryn, talking to Republicans and talking to Democrats—within the first year or second year, this was on everybody’s tongue.

01-00:58:30  
Meeker:

Actually, to backtrack a little bit, do you have your own journey story about coming to desire the right to marry?

01-00:58:43  
Deutsch:

I think Teresa and I started thinking about the right to marry when we had kids. We really started realizing the impact, legally, of not being able to get married, on these children. Our middle son—I don’t remember how old he was, but he was very little—came home one day, pretty much in tears, because he—I don’t remember how it happened, but he realized we weren’t married. He had always thought we were married, and how could we not be married? He was crushed that we weren’t married, this little teeny kid. It became very clear what we all learn about the impact of marriage and the importance of marriage. All of a sudden, this little—I think he was like three or four-year-old—realized that something was wrong with his family, because his moms weren’t married. Never occurred to him that he had two moms, and

that that may have been different in any way, but that they weren't married was really a hardship and a problem for him. So we always wanted to get married once we had the opportunity. Every single state that passed marriage, we would sit down and go, all right, now do we fly to California really fast, or do we fly to Oregon, do we fly to Massachusetts? We really wanted to get married in our new adopted state: we had been in Maryland forever. So we held out. We actually officially said we were going to get married the night that we realized we won in Maryland, and then we got married six months later. But it was always important to us, not only for that commitment—we always felt that we had a lifelong relationship, because we had already been in a lifelong relationship, but we knew what the impact of marriage was. The difference of being able to say “wife” is really pretty extraordinary.

01-00:00:30

Meeker:

Was there a point in your life before that that you had a feminist critique of marriage as a patriarchal institution that—

01-01:00:37

Deutsch:

Of course. Yeah.

01-01:00:43

Meeker:

So it sounds like your transformation was almost instantaneous when you see your son responding in this way, or not?

01-01:00:50

Deutsch:

But there was also the difference of it wasn't a marriage to the patriarchy, because I was involved with a woman at that point. There's a shift in the profile of marriage for me at that point, because I wasn't getting married to a man. I was with this woman, who also wanted to spend her life with me. Then, I guess the shift is what marriage really does mean, and what the love and commitment and the permanency of marriage means to a relationship. That came to us through the kids. We got married a week before our thirtieth anniversary, and just had this beautiful wedding in Maryland, with about a hundred of our closest friends. It was extraordinary. We both wore white dresses, even though we were old at that point—older at that point. [laughter]

01-01:01:48

Meeker:

Sorry for that segue. It's something that's very interesting to me, because there are quite a few people who became very active on the issue, but certainly didn't start there. There was a very long-term dislike of the idea of marriage for any number of reasons.

01-01:02:10

Deutsch:

Well, and the history of marriage and what happened to women in marriages, and how long it took the country to get that fixed. Then we were heading into this. I think it was awkward—someone called us “Mrs. and Mrs.” the first week, and we're like, no. It's more like “Ms. and Ms.,” but thanks.

01-01:02:39

Meeker:

Let's go back to talking about the Respect for Marriage Act. Sorry, that was the name of the act, right?

01-01:02:48

Deutsch:

Yes.

01-01:02:49

Meeker:

And trying to generate support from legislators. I've heard the sort of journey narrative. This gets brought up in almost every interview. For somebody who works in narrative, it's quite interesting for me that narrative actually becomes a tool for social change. Can you kind of walk through how you utilized, or modeled, or whatever, this idea of a journey to give that to a legislator as a tool for them to use?

01-01:03:31

Deutsch:

For Democrats, we used the president's journey most often, because you could see, for him, that he was in a movement of how he was going to get from point A to point B. So we could talk about that to Democrats. For Republicans, again, I want to go back to the importance of how many of us came out, and the stories and the connections, because that really did have a huge impact on Republicans. I want to say we worked really hard on getting Republican support. At the end, we had four, five Republicans on the bill in the House, and none in the Senate. If you use the barometer of how many co-sponsors you had, and who actually came out and said something in support of the Respect for Marriage Act, we weren't that successful. There were more people who came out to say something about the freedom to marry, and to say something about what was happening in their states. But the Republicans were very wary about this, and so the journey stories were much slower on the Republican side. We would consistently find people in states who they knew, or again, their offices, and come in and say, this is what's happening.

What was intriguing and interesting, and probably will never happen to me in my lobbying career again, is besides this kind of level of lobbying that we were doing, you had the universe of activities happening for the freedom to marry out there. There was activism in every state. There were judge's ruling and making decisions. You had this kind of cloud—happy cloud, not a bad cloud, not a gray cloud—that was constantly over these scenarios. When Iowa moved marriage, you could then go to the Iowan caucus and say, Iowa hasn't fallen off the map. Your constituents are now going and getting married, and nothing is changing, except now this is what they're protected, and this is what they're doing. These are the people you're sitting next to in church, who are getting married. There was this element that was out of our control, in some ways, for federal lobbying, that was also pushing this journey story and narrative forward for us, that was remarkable. Who knows when that will ever happen again? There may be a couple issues that that could happen on, like final decisions on death, because you have a state component, but this was really a novel scenario, in some ways, for lobbying.

01-01:06:16

Meeker:

I can imagine you are probably a little reticent to talk about specific examples of legislators you worked with. If you would maybe just kind of walk me through an example of a successful changing of a mind of a particular legislator. If you want to use her name, great. If you don't—

01-01:06:39

Deutsch:

I'll give you one, and I'm not sure how successful we were in the end. It's a Republican member who I've known a very long time, who I have known to be—I don't know that progressive is the right word, but a little more liberal and open-minded to civil rights issues. We would go in and see him—and by we, I mean me and Kathryn—every eight months. Four years ago, he's like, "There's no way this is going to happen. I just can't do this. It will be the death of me. I won't be able to be reelected." We could give him examples of people in the area, but he said no. Visit, visit. A year later, he's like, "You know, I'm really busy on another huge issue right now, and if I'm taking on this, I can't take on something else. My constituents are already mad enough at me about this. I can't do any of that." That lasted for about a year and a half. The last time we went in to see him, he said—and this is before we really knew that we were just going to win a month later—he said, "I'm getting closer. I am totally with you on this. I do believe in your right to get married. I do believe that this has to be fixed. I just can't do this right now."

So that's an example of the politics of it. Knowing that somebody, in his heart and his brain, knew the right way to do it, but was afraid politically to move forward. We had to figure out how to calm political nerves. Sometimes we did, sometimes we didn't. Some of the Republicans we got to sign on, signed on after announcing retirement or after they had lost their reelection and they were going to be gone. So they had nothing to lose anymore. For a lot of these members, it all has to do with, will I be reelected if I do this or not? What's the ramification? A success story is when they finally realized—like Senator Kirk, who never signed onto the bill, but did clearly come out in support to the freedom to marry, partially because he has a gay child—that supporting the freedom to marry was the right thing to do.

01-01:08:50

Meeker:

Senator Kirk. Is this Oregon?

01-01:08:51

Deutsch:

Illinois.

01-01:08:52

Meeker:

Illinois. Okay, that's right. Mark Kirk.

01-01:08:53

Deutsch:

Yes. He had his own personal journey that, again, it's the stories and the commitments and the people you know that finally made them realize what was happening. That was a success. For us, the tricky part, especially after Windsor, where we pretty much wiped out most of DOMA—at that point,

lobbying was almost impossible, because you had taken the Respect for Marriage Act and you had kind of cut it in half, because you had already done this part, and this part was just really the part of taking it off the books. You were left with lobbying on what still needed to be corrected. Jo Deutsch just got married, but she still can't get her VA, or her Social Security benefits. So working with the Administration became more important and the Hill work became much less important to the federal work. I did continue to keep going up on the Hill and talking about why we needed their support. Would they write a letter to the editor for their newspaper? Would they bring it up in a speech that they were doing? Just to keep it always in everybody's front lobe. That's what we were doing at the end.

01-01:10:08  
Meeker:

Can you actually explain that a little bit more? Because I think the common perception is that Windsor overturned DOMA completely.

01-01:10:16  
Deutsch:

It overturned DOMA, but DOMA's still on the books. There were a couple sections, and Windsor overturned the federal piece, that the federal government would now recognize marriages, but DOMA's still on the books. DOMA has not been rescinded off of the books right now, although, with the Supreme Court decision, it doesn't mean anything.

01-01:10:44  
Meeker:

It's moot.

01-01:14:45  
Deutsch:

Yes. But for Evan, he wanted it gone. He didn't even want it on the books anymore. So we tried to keep pushing it to see if we could pass the Respect for Marriage Act, but at that point, it really did become a grassroots state and Supreme Court activity, and not the Hill. What we did mostly for the Hill at that point was to talk to Congressmembers about helping to do things in their states, especially if there were things moving in the states. So we did a lot of, "Would you, John Lewis, go back to Georgia and talk to people in Georgia because you've always supported the freedom to marry, and you are so well-spoken about civil rights. Would you go home and talk about this? Would you do a video for us that we can use?" Especially the Southern states, we did a lot of, "Would you go back to your state and talk about your support?" And a little less of Respect for Marriage.

01-01:11:43  
Meeker:

So what you're talking about now is, when Windsor was decided in June of 2013, how really your job shifts pretty substantially?

01-01:11:53  
Deutsch:

Completely. Right. There had been a couple programs that we had started during all this. The Respect for Marriage Coalition, which was helping with the lobbying. We had done the Democratic platform. We had done—



01-01:12:13

Meeker: Is that the Democrats: Say I Do campaign?

01-01:12:15

Deutsch: Yes.

01-01:12:15

Meeker: Can you talk about that a little bit more?

01-01:12:20

Deutsch: This was prior to the president coming out in support. We wanted language in the Democratic platform in support of the freedom to marry.

01-01:12:34

Meeker: In 2012?

01-01:12:35

Deutsch: In 2012. We came up with this whole program where we were going to build momentum so that when they got to Charlotte, there would be this groundswell of support, and we would get really solid language in there. What we didn't expect was, within moments of initiating this campaign, then Speaker [Nancy] Pelosi came out in support, like, instantly. That was our snowball. Because once Pelosi came out in support, then it was just this, everybody wanted to come out in support. We didn't even have to get to the convention. It was already done before we got to the convention. At that point, because it's the president's platform, he also came out in support of the Respect for Marriage and freedom to marry. That was an easier push, but we also knew, at that same time, that the Republicans had a platform that, in five places in the platform, it had just evil, awful, homophobic, anti-gay language in it. We were starting to think about what we were going to do four years out, which will be next year, for the Republican platform.

We were also trying to figure out, where are the other constituencies and groups that would be helpful to us to move this forward, that we would get a bigger voice? So in 2012, we started Mayors for the Freedom to Marry. We started with about 60 Mayors. We ended up with almost 700-plus mayors who had signed on at some point over the three years, and we used the mayors just as we used Congressmembers, to be the groundswell. To talk about, as an elected official, why this was important to their constituents, and to have a kind of—its bottom-up and top-down in everything that we do. That program was already in place. Then we already had a program in place called Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry. We had seen early on—again knowing that we weren't going to win this unless it was bipartisan and nonpartisan—that the polling numbers for Republican millennials were already off the chart. They were already well above, I think at that point, I think we were at sixty, or low seventies maybe, in support, of Republican conservative voters for the freedom to marry. This was a group—

01-01:15:08

Meeker: Young people.

01-01:15:09

Deutsch:

Young people, both sides of the aisle, who just didn't quite understand what was taking us old folks so long to do this. This made perfect sense to them on every level. For Republicans who live by the creed, "Government out of my personal life. Government shouldn't be involved in my life at all," this was logical for them. The government should not be telling people they can or cannot get married and to whom. This is my right as a citizen of this country. So we put together this group of young conservatives, which was made up of libertarians, conservatives, and Republicans, all under the age of forty—we started a little lower, but then they got a little older, so it was under forty—who were our voices for young Republicans, young conservatives, to talk about the freedom to marry. That program was already in place. So post-Windsor, my responsibility as federal director became more of a program manager, specifically for those programs. Yet, to still keep discussions on Capitol Hill, to still keep the Respect for Marriage Coalition going, so that there was this constant banter on every level, from the left to the right, from the top to the bottom, on why the freedom to marry was so important in this country, and why we needed to move forward.

About a year and a half ago, we realized that we could do more with the young conservatives. At that point, we morphed young conservatives to then work on a platform campaign, and specifically on changing the minds of the Republicans so that they not only removed these five pieces that are so egregious in their platform, but at least think about some language that was fairer and more inclusive. We weren't pushing freedom to marry language, necessarily, but something that your supporters, who are twenty-five and thirty years old, may still follow your party because you have this language in it. So we started a road tour, and we went to each of the primary states with a group of anywhere from three to six young conservatives to talk to other leaders in those states from the Republican party, other youth groups, to really get the ball rolling on why the Republican platform has to be rewritten in 2016. That group actually has morphed into a new group, and they will continue that work beyond Freedom to Marry. They're not calling themselves Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry, but they are still doing Republican platform work.

01-01:17:47

Meeker: What group is that?

01-01:17:49

Deutsch: I am not sure what the new name is.

01-01:17:55

Meeker: Okay. But it's not associated with the American Unity Fund?

01-01:18:00

Deutsch:

It is, actually. It is associated with AUF.

01-01:18:04

Meeker:

I'm wondering, when you're managing this Young Conservatives group, and they're going and speaking to state leaders, is there much suspicion that this is kind of like a Trojan horse, or these people aren't really conservatives, because if they were, they wouldn't be asking for this? How did the senior conservatives respond to this movement from youth, from below?

01-01:18:40

Deutsch:

One of the remarkable things about the young conservatives that we were traveling with—and actually, all the young conservatives—there were sixty, seventy at the end—were their backgrounds. They had all very solid resumes with very right-of-center candidates. You're talking about Perry, McCain, Huntsman, Bush. You're talking backgrounds in the most conservative Republican candidates that we have seen in the last ten, fifteen years. So we would start every meeting with every single young conservative giving a little bit of background about themselves and who they had worked for and what they were doing now. That wiped that out any cynicism completely, because they instantly knew, these are real conservatives. Many of them, because they had been around in the Republican circle so long, were already known by the people we were meeting with. "Oh, you know Jim. You know Jeff." There was this kind of connection with these young conservatives with the people we were talking to. There was never a doubt, ever, that these weren't legitimate conservatives. That's what made everything that came out of their mouths so incredible. We would go into a city or a state, and we would do one interview on TV, and every other channel would call us instantly and say, "We want to do an interview." Because it was so unique to have these very conservative young men and women speaking out on behalf of the freedom to marry, in an incredibly articulate way. And again, talking about government being out of our lives, this is why this made so much sense. I would say 90 percent of the people we went with were straight allies. Very few gay allies—gay young conservatives—were out there with us. We had one Young Conservative (a straight ally) who would sit down and talk about how closely tied he is with his church, the Mormon Church, and his wife, and what they do, and who he's worked for, and there was no denying his political background. And there was no political denying, when you got in the car and you started talking about other issues, these were solid Republicans.

01-01:20:55

Meeker:

This comes from the sort of strategy, I guess, of the unexpected voices or advocates. Is that approach something that was familiar to you in your previous political work, that those unexpected voices are going to attract more media attention than having like a Bernie Sanders come out? Although he wasn't necessarily a vocal advocate either.

01-01:21:21  
Deutsch:

I don't know if I always had the experience of unexpected voices, but I always knew that coalitions and numerous voices were crucial to any success. I think probably fifteen years ago, I would never have guessed that I would be in a car with six conservative Republicans, talking about the freedom to marry, but it totally worked. In the end, it was the unexpected, in some ways, that made a difference. But also, going back, not to repeat myself, it was, again, the outing of all of us. In these Republican offices where they had staff who were out Republican men and women, or I was up on the Hill with Kathryn Lehman, who everybody had known, who has been a lobbyist for the Republican party for thirty years, these are all people they already knew. So yeah, it's a little unexpected, but yet the relationships, I know these people exist.

We went to see an assemblywoman from Nevada, who actually has been in the press lately because of her family Christmas picture with everyone holding guns. We went to her house. She is a very, very, very strong supporter of the freedom to marry. Hmm. Her mother is a lesbian. You just don't know where those ties are. Clearly, she was there with us. Clearly, she's completely opposite of me on virtually everything else. But she was there for us. We kept finding people like this. The chairwoman in a small state, Republican chairwoman, who was very skeptical and wary about really coming out and supporting us, and that, the night before, when she told her kids who she was meeting with, they're like, "Mom, why wouldn't you do this? This is a given. There's no second-guessing this anymore. This is what you should do." That's what these people were hearing, from their families, what was right and what was wrong. Yes, in some ways, surprising characters, but voices in all of our families.

01-01:23:38  
Meeker:

I have one question I kind of wanted to backtrack. We can certainly talk about that issue more. The various Democrats: Say I Do, and Obama: Say I Do, campaigns, and then you said that once you launched the Democrats: Say I Do, right away, Minority Leader Pelosi, at that point had come out in support. Did you have to do much lobbying with her, or did you have any engagement with her whatsoever, or just—

01-01:24:18  
Deutsch:

We were actually all pretty surprised. Not surprised that she took that position, because she had always been supportive, but we were ill-prepared in some ways for it to kick out. We had a whole timeline and plan that we then just threw away, because once someone came out and said, "This is what we should do," then everybody else followed. That was true in all the work that we did. When you got Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who was our first Republican Congressmember, who is from South Florida, to come out in support of the freedom to marry, that gave support and backup for other people to do it, whether they were other South Floridians who were Democrats who weren't quite sure or other Republicans across the country. For Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, it was really personal for her, too. Her son is gay. But she had major backlash,

and she had major backlash from the Catholic Church in Miami. She did an interview saying, “I am Catholic, and this is important to me, but they’re wrong, and I’m not changing my position, because I am right.” That was incredibly powerful to Catholic Republicans and Democrats all across the country. Number one, okay, so the Catholic Church takes me on and is going to fight against me, but I’m still going to get reelected, and this is the right thing to do.

We had these examples all the time. We had a map on our website, where every time we had a new mayor, we would light up their city. If you had a new state, the whole state would light up, so you’d be the first Mayor in the state. We had the first mayor of Kansas come out in support. Tiny, rural, no place—nobody had ever heard of Salina, except that they had had a horrible tornado—tornado? Tornado or flood. It must have been a tornado if it’s Kansas. She was instantly taken on by the right, and they were going to impeach her. They planned to take her down at a town hall meeting. She had called me and said, “I need help.” We said, “We’ll do whatever you want us to do.” The town hall meeting was actually aired. There is one man who stands up in opposition, yelling at her about how she’s made a mistake and they’re going to impeach her. Then there’s fifty people who have come to the town hall meeting to talk about their support of the mayor, including a woman who was probably about forty-five or fifty, who stands up and immediately starts crying, and talks about how she was born and raised in Salina, and nobody knows she’s gay, and today she can come out. And she did, right there, on the camera, in front of this town hall meeting. It was the end of any impeachment talk. I was, of course, at my computer, just crying my eyeballs out. Here was this woman who just finally felt safe because the mayor supported her. Those were the kind of mayor moments, and the kind of journey moments, that were just mind-blowing. She didn’t run again, and the mayor who took her place actually signed up as a Mayor for the Freedom to Marry. So we kept Kansas on the map.

01-01:27:47  
Meeker:

What kind of support was Freedom to Marry able to provide?

01-01:27:54  
Deutsch:

We offered her messaging. We did some social media work to get support. We tried to get other people from Kansas, and bigger places in Kansas, to support her. In Texas, when a similar thing happened to one of our mayors, all of our mayors who were already on the list did a joint op-ed for one of the major newspapers in her area to say, we’re all mayors in Texas, and this is important. So we would try to do that kind of stuff. If she had actually been impeached, I think we would probably have tried to do something else. For her and for me, it was incredible moral support so she didn’t feel like she was all by herself in the universe. That there was somebody watching out. Actually, I sent her a Christmas card yesterday. We’ve kept in touch.

01-01:28:51

Meeker:

Did these kinds of requests for help happen pretty regularly?

01-01:28:58

Deutsch:

When we would get a new state, and it would be a state that was a little shocking, I would reach out to the mayor instantly and say, “We just want you to know, you’re going to be the first one. So as the first one, we’re lighting up the map. We’re going to send out a press release. Whatever we can do with your staff to help you out, to get ready, we are prepared to do. We’ll need a quote and picture from you.” We did that kind of work. We built relationships in a very personal way with those folks. For bigger cities, they would just do it.

01-01:29:34

Meeker:

How did you become aware of these people signing on? Would they sign on through—

01-01:29:39

Deutsch:

They had to sign on through the website. They would sign on through the website, and then I would get an instant notice.

01-01:29:46

Meeker:

Through this particular initiative?

01-01:29:48

Deutsch:

Yes, exactly, through Mayors for the Freedom to Marry. When we launched Mayors for the Freedom to Marry, on a Friday afternoon—it’s not the best day to launch, but—by Sunday we had, I don’t remember, like fifty new mayors. We were working all weekend, adding these mayors on. Sunday afternoon, I started getting phone calls from irate mayors who didn’t support the freedom to marry, and asking why was their name was on this list? What became very clear was other people, less than honest constituents, were signing up their mayors. I’m such an honest person, it never occurred to me that anybody would do that. So we started taking everyone down, and we came up with a whole new system that was a couple security steps before we actually would put somebody on the list. We learned—I learned—the hard way that not everybody is honest in the country. We took all those bad people off, and they got off. Then we had this new system. With the new system, I would get a notice, and then I would write, with the email addresses, the mayor, and say, “Wanted to confirm.” Then if it was a first or something big, I would say, “Can we talk, get this all set up? We can time out when we light this up, when we send out our press release.” We would help in that way, but we would know in advance. Through the three years of the program, we still consistently got fake mayor requests, but we never added a bogus Mayor again after that first weekend.

01-01:31:21

Meeker:

I think that in our pre-interview conversation, one of the things that I think you described as part of your job here was—and maybe this is my terminology—was like a beltway influencer, so engaging with opinion-makers,

getting in media, especially trying to get *Washington Post* to cover freedom to marry issues, in part because the Supreme Court would have been reading the *Washington Post*, which also relates to trying to figure out ways to influence members of the Supreme Court, particularly one member.

01-01:32:01

Deutsch: That's all we needed.

01-01:32:04

Meeker: Can you talk a little bit about this aspect of your job?

01-01:32:09

Deutsch: It wasn't my job to do the media piece. The media ask of the *Post*, as well as some of the Hill rags, was done by our communications team, whether that was the communications team in New York, or a couple times we had hired consulting firms to help with communications. So they really did that piece of it. My piece was more to always keep the banter on Capitol Hill; to always make sure I was still up there talking to people about the Respect for Marriage Act, even when we knew we probably were never going to be able to move it. To find any new co-sponsor we could find. To go see Republican members, at least to help them again with their journey and to move them forward a little bit about what was going on. There was also, during this whole time period, whenever we would really win anything, our opponents would come out of the woodwork with really lousy and terrible amendments and bills. So there was also that piece of the legislative work to do, to try to not only stop these bills and amendments from going forward, but to make sure that a Congressman who was moving along on their journey, and maybe not there with us yet, didn't make the mistake of signing onto these bad bills. So we were doing that kind of proactive lobbying as well. But also to always be making connections with the home states and the federal government.

Again, the mayors played a major role. For example, the Minnesota Equality Group decided that they really wanted to meet with mayors with families, to talk to the mayors about what it meant to them in Minnesota not to have the freedom to marry. This was right before they voted on it in the state. So we worked with the mayors in those states, but we also contacted the Senators who were with us in Minnesota to say, "These meetings are going on. We want you to know." There was this constant effort to make sure that the right hand knew what the left hand was doing, and that there was always this discussion going on that would be heard by the Supreme Court in some way or another. Whether it was an ad that we did, whether it was a story that we did, whether it was another Congressman coming out in support, that, every week, or every other week, or however often we could do it, the Supreme Court knew that the country was getting really ready for this, and eventually was totally ready for this. That was part of the federal work.

01-01:34:45

Meeker:

It's such a fascinating strategy, because I think that there is this perception, and clearly a mistaken perception, that the justices' sort of work in the rarified world of constitutional law, and that what so-and-so mayor does, or what article appears in the *Washington Post*, will be ultimately irrelevant. But it seems to me, from very early on, Evan, and I imagine many other people, knew that these people are real humans and they live in the real world.

01-01:35:21

Deutsch:

They go home and they read their local newspapers, and they talk to their neighbors. If any case where they just happened to spot another article about the freedom to marry, that's going to be helpful. We didn't specifically figure out where they live and do things in those states, but there was this constant drumbeat to make sure that there was never a quiet moment for the work that we were doing, whether in the field, in the grassroots, in the states, or in Washington, DC.

01-01:35:52

Meeker:

It's quite interesting. Who wouldn't love to interview Justice Anthony Kennedy? I remember that one of the, I don't know predictions, but one of the ideas, was that the Perry (2013) case could have actually resulted in marriage nationwide, and instead they ruled on jurisdictional grounds. A question I would ask him—and this is a rhetorical question for you—was it just, you thought in 2013 that the nation wasn't ready for it?

01-01:36:27

Deutsch:

Yeah. Who knows, because there was that option. The Supreme Court can never be explained or second-guessed. They may have really seen that case, totally with their legal perspective, as a California overturning Prop 8 case, and that's how they looked at it. Or they did go, whew, are we really ready to do this? When they did that a year and a half ago, none of us suspected that it was going to be the next term. I mean, we hoped, and we kept the drumbeat, and we kept working on this, but I think they really thought, just as our two-hour smoking ban, that this would appease them for some period of time, and then eventually—but it didn't take very long. I think it took us a year to go from two hours to full ban, and it took us a year to go from Windsor to the—

01-01:37:18

Meeker:

Well, two years.

01-01:37:19

Deutsch:

Two years, yes.

01-01:37:22

Meeker:

But that's no time and—

01-01:37:23

Deutsch:

It's a blink.



01-01:37:26

Meeker:

Because then, during that two-year period of time, you just have this explosion of state and appeal court decisions.

01-01:37:36

Deutsch:

Some would argue that those were not necessarily something that we had work to do, as state and state and state and state fell. We would argue that we had everything in place for them, and it gave us the opportunity to just keep moving forward. When that map really started lighting up, it was phenomenal. There was, again, no turning back. As I said earlier, nobody has ever gone backwards on this issue. World was still turning. People are getting married, and now they're protected, and life goes on. You saw it in Iowa to start.

01-01:38:19

Meeker:

Can you tell me a little bit about your interaction with the home office in New York? Here you are in DC. It's not that far away, but still. I guess I'm thinking of, from an organizational, operational standpoint, how you worked with them, what kind of direction you were getting from them, how independent was your operation down here?

01-01:38:41

Deutsch:

Yes. I would like to say it was relatively independent, but if you learn anything about Freedom to Marry, what was the most brilliant thing that we actually really did was all stick to message, and all stick to the same message. There was never a moment where I would even think about anything that would be off course. With our roadmap, it was so clear what the vision was for Evan, and what the role of each of us was, that I was working here independently, and yet I knew exactly what the program was. The office in DC ended up being me, and I had an assistant, who mainly actually did most of the mayors work, and did really almost all the mayors upkeep. The one thing we learned about mayors that I didn't really realize before was that they turn over on like an hourly basis. There are mayors who, on May 3, have an election. It's like, May 3? What is May 3? We actually lost a lot of mayors in the last elections. But anyway. So it was that. We had a series of interns who helped us on a whole bunch of things. We had someone here who did our Familia es Familia program out of Washington, DC. Then, for a while, we had a state person here, and then he moved on. So the office was very small, and yet there was constant communication with New York. I don't know that I ever did anything that wasn't in this plan instantly and that we knew what my next job was. After Windsor, again, it was really focused on the programs, and working on the programs.

01-01:40:39

Meeker:

How did they instruct you in messaging? Because there is such message discipline coming from the top in this organization. You come into it not having a long background in this movement.

01-01:41:00

Deutsch:

I think Thalia had already put together some background messaging and the polling information for us all to read, and then as we were on our learning curves, I think each one of us made one mistake that would then get an email back saying, “We don’t say”—

01-01:41:16

Meeker:

Marriage equality?

01-01:41:17

Deutsch:

“Marriage equality,” or whatever—yeah. Then we’d be like, okay, we never say that. When you think about how brilliant we were with the messaging, it was pretty simple. It wasn’t incredibly difficult. This is what we had to do, and that was it. It wasn’t constantly changing. Once you kind of knew how to answer a question and what you were doing, you had the messaging down. Once you had talked about, 900 times, what the roadmap was and how it all was interconnected, then you knew that, and you could move forward.

01-01:41:50

Meeker:

It’s interesting how integral the roadmap is, not just as a strategy or a vision, but operationally. I read through a good portion of those dashboards. That’s how it’s organized.

01-01:42:08

Deutsch:

Oh, completely. There were clearly times when I felt like we were definitely separate and things were going on in New York that we didn’t know about, until the dashboard would come out at the end of the month and we’d be like, oh, now we know what they’re doing. But I think that’s a given with the geographic split. It was never anything that was, I should have known that. It was just, this is the world that they were working on and it was ever-changing.

01-01:42:42

Meeker:

Don’t have a whole lot of time left, and so there’s just kind of a few wrap-up questions. Is there anything that I haven’t covered with you about your work that you think we should spend a few minutes on?

01-01:43:01

Deutsch:

Let me just look through this [reads a document] [extraneous side conversation cut] Oh, I didn’t talk about the briefs. Let’s do that. We didn’t talk about the salons. I would say let’s go back to just a little bit on the amicus briefs, because that was really pretty huge.

01-01:44:50

Meeker:

I do want to know a little bit about the consulting firms. I’m thinking about this largely not only for capturing the history of it, but thinking about other similar movements for social justice as they’re kind of looking, perhaps, at this as a model, and might have debates along the way. Do we work with consulting firms or do we try to keep everything in-house? What was the decision-making process about that, and what were the good rationales to bring consulting firms in to assist?

01-01:45:30

Deutsch:

When I started, and I was really the only person here in Washington—and I actually was working out of my house at first. We didn't even have an office. As remarkable as a person can be, one person is not a team. So it was very clear that we should probably have a backup team so we could do more work in Washington. As soon as we started, we hired DCI, and we hired the Hattaway Group. DCI was really supposed to do a little more right-of-center work and helping us build the new programs, as well as do some of the media work for us, and basic group support. Then Hattaway was supposed to do more of the Democratic media piece. Within, I think, probably six months or seven months, we decided that we could do away with Hattaway and do everything through DCI. The upside with consultants is that you get an army of people. You get more support. You have staff whom can help set up that first meeting with all the mayors. They had contacts that I didn't have. I had never really done mayors work before, so they had some of that on the ground that they could do. The downside for any consulting firm is, you're one of many clients, and you're not the center of the universe, and you want to be the center of the universe. We weren't paying huge amounts of money to these consulting firms, so we got what they could give us. In the end, we decided, with DCI, that we didn't need the capacity that they were giving us. At that point, I think I had finally hired my first assistant. Again, the upside is that there is expertise that I didn't have, and there are numbers, power numbers, that I couldn't do by myself. The flip side is, we weren't the center of the universe. Because of that, some of the work was just easier for me to spend twenty-four-seven getting it done than dealing with the consulting firm.

When we hired DCI, that's where we got Kathryn Lehman to start. She had a connection with DCI. At the end of the year, when we really thought we no longer needed DCI, we knew we still needed Kathryn. So we went ahead and we hired Kathryn and her firm (Holland and Knight), and with that, we actually got some more support. It wasn't just Kathryn. We got a woman who worked for Holland & Knight, whose entire existence is mayors. That's all she does, is mayor work. Eve brought to the table connections with mayors that I never could have dreamed that we could have, and really did phenomenal work for us with mayors. Then we had some support staff from them, too. That's kind of the upside and the downside. If we had a team of thirty people here, ten people here, we probably wouldn't have needed the consultants, but we didn't. The consultants have relationships with people that were important early on to the work that we were doing.

01-01:48:42

Meeker:

It's like a capacity bridge.

01-01:48:44

Deutsch:

Yes. Capacity and the connection, the networking. I had spent thirty years in the labor movement. I had spent thirty years up on the Hill. I didn't know mayors. I didn't know that many Republicans. I knew the old guard Republicans who were flushed out when Newt Gingrich came in, and were

more central and I could go in and talk to them about union issues, but they were all gone. So this provided a team that we needed. We ended up with just the Holland & Knight contract for us here in DC.

01-01:49:20

Meeker: And that was Lehman's firm?

01-01:49:21

Deutsch: Yes.

01-01:49:24

Meeker: Let's talk about the amicus briefs.

01-01:49:27

Deutsch: Going with what a consulting firm can help us with, it was decided that, for both round one and round two of the Supreme Court, that getting as many voices into the Supreme Court in support of the cases would be really important. The first round, we helped people with amicus briefs, but the second round, we decided that we were going to do the first mayor's amicus brief ever. There was a brief that was being put together by Ken Mehlman for Republicans. We would support that brief, with support from the Young Conservatives, with help from Kathryn Lehman. So we reached out to work on the Republican brief. First round with Windsor, I actually played a major role helping House and Senate staff on the congressional brief, and to call Congressmembers' offices and say, "Here's the brief that Congress members can sign onto, and will you do that?" There always was a variety of briefs, but this was the first time for mayors. The mayors' brief was actually written by the attorneys from the Mayor of LA and his office. They were amazing.

01-01:50:48

Meeker: This is [Eric] Garcetti at the time?

01-01:50:49

Deutsch: Yes. Just remarkable. Young woman who had never written a brief before just wrote this perfect, brilliant brief. Then it was our job, me and my assistant, to get as many of our mayors as we possibly could get to sign on. The tricky part is that from the time the Supreme Court announces it will take a case to the time that the briefs are due is less than a month. You not only have to write it and get it approved, get it approved by Evan, but then you have to get it approved by as many mayors as you can get. So it's basically what we lived and breathed for three weeks. In the end, we filed the largest amicus brief of mayors ever in the history of briefs to the Supreme Court. It not only had mayors, but it also had cities. The mayors would raise their hand and say, "We also want LA listed. We don't want just the mayor." So we had cities listed as well. We had the two leading mayors groups in the country sign onto it. It was just this phenomenal example of using the grassroots efforts and the program that we had built to make sure that the Supreme Court knew that this wasn't just an inside-the-beltway thing. There were mayors all across the country, from the smallest of towns to the largest of cities, who were saying, this is

what the people of my community need, and now is the time for you to do it. It turned out to be just a really remarkable, pain-in-the-ass project, but a really remarkable project in the end.

01-01:52:20

Meeker:

Did you say this was for Windsor or this was for Obergefell?

01-01:52:22

Deutsch:

The second case.

01-01:52:24

Meeker:

Obergefell?

01-01:52:24

Deutsch:

Yes.

01-01:52:27

Meeker:

You must have known that you were going to have this window coming up, or very likely.

01-01:52:33

Deutsch:

Yes and no. You sort of didn't know. For both of the cases, the decisions for—and I'm not an attorney—but the decisions for the briefs really fall on the attorneys who are leading the cases. It's their case, and they want to make sure that the messaging is all right. With a number of cases on the table, the question of who is even going to do this in front of the Supreme Court. This was before they had picked Mary Bonauto to be the attorney. If you did a mayors brief, then do you do X, or should we do Y? All of these strategy decisions were going on at the same time. I never really knew, until the day Evan called and said go, which was about two and a half weeks before the due date, that we were going to do the brief. Then we just went. We just contacted every single mayor, again and again and again. Some were easy. Some mayors never respond to emails. Some mayors never look at their email. Some mayors never pick up the phone. It's just a crazy universe of political legislators, mayors.

01-01:53:46

Meeker:

Were you just trying to get every mayor possible, or were you focused on big cities or—

01-01:53:50

Deutsch:

We were trying to get every mayor that we had who had already supported Mayors for the Freedom to Marry. We tried to be a little more specific thinking about where we had mayors signed up and where we didn't. Can we get at least one mayor from X so we can say it's across the country? We were really just hammering every single mayor to get as many mayors on there as we possibly could get.

- 01-01:54:14  
Meeker: I haven't read the brief. What was it that was so compelling to you about the brief?
- 01-01:54:19  
Deutsch: Again, it was that we are America. We talk to people who live in our towns every day and we know what the impact of this is. It was really that message again that was so brilliant. One that a Congressman can say, too, but it just was different coming from some of these mayors. Whether one of the Supreme Court justices looked at it and said, "Oh, now I know how I'm going to decide because of the mayors' brief," probably not. But it definitely, again, showed what we needed to show, which was America was ready. In the final day of the federal program, when we shut down the mayors program, we had forty-nine states covered. There's one state that we never got a single mayor from.
- 01-01:55:04  
Meeker: What was that?
- 01-01:55:05  
Deutsch: South Dakota.
- 01-01:55:06  
Meeker: I was going to say North or South Dakota.
- 01-01:55:10  
Deutsch: Evan knows, to my dying day, that is going to just drive me nuts. Just drive me batty. We were one state away from saying all fifty states. We never got South Dakota.
- 01-01:55:21  
Meeker: Were you close at all?
- 01-01:55:23  
Deutsch: No. No. There wasn't a single mayor in South Dakota that we thought was even starting the journey. None of them were willing to do it. It was really ugly.
- 01-01:55:34  
Meeker: That's amazing.
- 01-01:55:34  
Deutsch: We went to every city. We went to where the schools are, the big colleges. We never got a response from anyone in South Dakota. Every other state, yes: Idaho, North Dakota, Utah. Not South Dakota.
- 01-01:55:53  
Meeker: Utah now has a lesbian mayor. Salt Lake City, I should say.

01-01:55:57

Deutsch:

We actually had the Salt Lake City mayor, and now I assume that we would have gotten her. But we're done.

01-01:56:09

Meeker:

The salons?

01-01:56:10

Deutsch:

So again, not to beat a dead horse, but the purpose was to try to make sure that we had in place the leading advocate speakers, whether they were with us yet or not, to understand who Freedom to Marry was and what our messaging. We had a series of salons in 2011, 2012. We had a Republican salon with Republican leaders in town. We had a right-of-center salon. We had a media salon that had a huge number of the top media, top journalists in town. We had a Democratic salon. Each salon would bring together in a very small setting—it was never more than ten or twelve guests, and then Evan, Marc, me—and we would go through what Freedom to Marry was working on and the messaging. We got some incredible connections and stories out of those, but we also made that connection that, this is who we are. Most people in Washington did not know Freedom to Marry before we really started the work of the federal program. People knew Evan, but it hadn't been a DC based organization, and that's what we brought to the table. We are Freedom to Marry, we really are Freedom to Marry, and if you need us, if you need anything, if you have any ideas, we would be the people who could help you do that. The salons were very, very successful in that way. We made some connections early on that lasted the entire years. Evan already knew Ruth Marcus from the *Washington Post*, but in the salon it was clear that Ruth was really going to be our voice in the *Washington Post*. She wrote—I don't even remember how many editorials through the years that just nailed—just perfect—our messaging, right to the point, just what we needed, that the *Post* would show up with at the right time. That partially came from the salon.

01-01:58:15

Meeker:

What was the format of the salon?

01-01:58:17

Deutsch:

We would meet in a restaurant, private room, and we would have dinner, big round table. Evan would give an introduction, or Marc, about Freedom to Marry and what we were working on. We would talk a little bit about polling numbers that were relevant at that point, and then we would open the floor to people just having a conversation about what they've heard, what they need, what they're thinking. Very informal, very private.

01-01:58:46

Meeker:

And small, too?

01-01:58:47

Deutsch:

Very small. I think the biggest one was media, and we may have had like fifteen guests at that one, but most of them were ten to twelve guests. We also

did—which was very successful—we did an analysis of all of the polling information for the last twenty, twenty-five years, that was done by the head pollster for Obama and the head pollster for Bush. So again, to stick with the bipartisan part of this that showed the movement was making huge progress. That was when we first saw the numbers about millennials, really clearly saw movement in millennials. I think it was right after that we started Young Conservatives. That brought us a lot of press. We did an event at the Press Club with the two pollsters to talk about their findings. It was just, again, this constant everything we could do to make sure people understood what the momentum was and where we were going. That’s what we did inside the beltway.

01-01:59:49

Meeker:

Shall we wrap up? We could talk for hours more. Sorry, this is my second interview today, so I’m starting to fade a little bit.

01-02:00:01

Deutsch:

Was that what you wanted, I assume?

01-02:00:03

Meeker:

Yes. This is great. I do have one more question. This is something I’m asking everybody as well, similar to the first question. I’d love to know where you were and what your experience was of learning of the decision on Obergefell this past June.

01-02:00:24

Deutsch:

I’m going to do Windsor first. We knew the decision would be the next day because of the timing of the court. We had planned to have an email that would go out to every single supporter on Capitol Hill that we had, and all of the major staff, that would outline what the results were, what happened so that they could then take the messaging and do their press release instantly. I actually was at a computer when the Windsor decision came out and sent out this massive email that was very well-received and worthwhile. But I said out loud, “I don’t want to be in my office for the next one. I want to be in the middle of it.” On decision day for Obergefell, we had put together a group of twenty interns from Holland & Knight. We all had bags filled with signs, and they had T-shirts, and we had a huge banner that we had never had before, huge Freedom to Marry banner. We went up to the Supreme Court early that morning, and we were in the crowd. We handed out signs and we were in the crowd when the decision came. I was probably about twenty feet away from Teresa, with a million people in between. It was not hugely dramatic, because there wasn’t a public announcement. Everybody figured out that we had won by looking at their phones. But there was this moment that seemed like an eternity, with everyone trying to decide if this was really true. It really seemed like a minute, and it probably wasn’t that long, before the crowd erupted. There was this just painful silence, and you could see everybody on their phones. I was looking at Teresa, and we were like, did we? Then it erupted. Then you just start crying. Because you’re in front of the Supreme Court, and



you're in a crowd full of people. I was carrying this huge Freedom to Marry banner, which was a total pain in the neck in the end, because it was so large in this mob scene.

What was also remarkable for me on that day, from oral argument from Windsor to final decision to Windsor, to oral argument to final decision in Obergefell, the number of opponents in the crowd dramatically diminished. It was striking to me, for oral arguments for Windsor, the opponents actually had a massive parade through the proponents. They had permission to have a parade in front of the Supreme Court, and they had flags and banners and just tons of kids. It was so painful to watch. Then, for the decision in Windsor, there was this outcry of crazies on the edge. By the time we got to our final victory, there was a group of six Hasidic Jews, one loner, and Brian, who just kind of wandered around by himself. That was it. That was partially the amazement, was this was a totally supportive crowd. We had won. They knew we won, and they were gone. We had finished so many people's journeys that there wasn't anybody else out there but us. We stayed out there. I was there with Teresa, and then our oldest and our youngest was there. Our middle couldn't get here because of college. We must have stayed in front of the Supreme Court until about one, just taking it in. Just watching people, reading signs. Because there was still this sense of, really? Really? Of course, people were coming up to me going, "You lost your job!" and I was like, yeah, okay, got it. [laughter] I get that, too. It's a mixed blessing here, I get that. But I was in front of the Supreme Court. Then we gathered with the Freedom to Marry staff—

01-02:04:34  
Meeker:

Did you go down many days in advance because there was a sense that—

01-02:04:42  
Deutsch:

The original plan was—so we had all of our bags ready, and we had the interns all set, and then we'd sit and we'd listen to SCOTUSblog. The original plan was that we would, at the second that it won, we would get in a cab and we'd get up there. So we would miss it by a little bit, but we'd be there soon enough. But then you knew what the day was, and—

01-02:05:03  
Meeker:

Because it was the last day.

01-02:05:04  
Deutsch:

It was the last day, and that's happened before with Windsor as well. Actually, there were two more days, but everyone was pretty sure in this—you never know what pretty sure means with the Supreme Court. So we had decided that we would just go that morning and assume that it was that morning, and everybody else assumed it was that morning, too. Our little banners were lost in the sea of the HRC banners and everybody else's banners that were out there. That's why we were there, because we just assumed it was going to be that day. We went and we had lunch at a restaurant that's right near there, and

we drank champagne. That was one of the moments where I did feel like we were really separate from New York, because New York had all been at their table together, and they had all had champagne, too. It was like, we're not with them, and I wanted to be with them, but we were in Washington, which is where we should be. Then we got home, like three or four, and we were exhausted, and we were sitting on the couch and watching all the news. That's when the first shot of the White House came up. It was actually Evan being interviewed, and they had it behind him. We thought, they're lighting up the White House in rainbow colors. Our youngest and Teresa and I didn't want to miss seeing it in person so we jumped in the car and headed to the White House. I think, of all of the moments that day, that's where we cried the most. That was just breathtaking to be in front of the White House and see it in rainbow colors, with everybody—see, I still gets to me—with everybody out there. The crowd just kept growing, because they'd turn on the news and they'd see it, and then they'd come running out to the White House. It was just this amazing night of, there it was. The White House was rainbow colors. Something that they kept up until five o'clock the next morning.

01-02:06:51

Meeker:

What did that mean?

01-02:06:54

Deutsch:

It was a truth that, from every level, we had won. It was an acknowledgement from the President of the United States that our lives and our marriages mattered, in a just obvious way. He could come out at four o'clock or three o'clock, whatever time he made his announcement, and said, "I'm so happy, and this is so great," but this was the White House. This is the symbol of America and the symbol of the President of the United States, all in rainbow color. It was just breathtaking and so beautiful. We stayed out there a long time, until our daughter finally said, "I'm really tired." Like, okay. All right, we've taken it all in and now we'll go home now. We had come so far through our lives from asking can we walk down the street holding hands, or can we actually, in an introduction, say this is my wife? And now to this moment, there we were in front of the White House, in all of its colorful glory, with all of these people holding hands. I can't tell you how many proposals we saw, with people just dropping to their knees right and left. It was like, another one dropping to their knees, and everybody started to clap. It was just phenomenal.

We have a very, very old friend who actually was a babysitter for the boys when they were little, who are now twenty-one and twenty-five. She's worked in the White House for about twenty years. As we were driving over, we got an email from her going, "OMG. I'm working tonight in a White House that's all rainbow-colored." We wrote back saying, "We're on our way. Can you come out and see us?" So we got to see her, too. She came out and she told us some stories about how they lit it up, and how President Obama was actually really upset because he couldn't go out and see it. If they had him come out, then they were going to have to clear the area where everybody else was

standing, and then everybody would know the President was out there, and then everybody would be annoyed. So he never got to come out, and he actually said a couple days later that that was his major disappointment, that he could never come out to see the colors. The first lady snuck out, and she apparently snuck out through a door just so she could see it, and then ran back in again before Secret Service would clear the deck. It was so important for them that they did this. I asked my friend, "Did they just happen to have rainbow lights ready?" She said, "We had them ready. If there was a victory, we knew we were going to do this, and then we screwed them in really fast." It was amazing. It was amazing. That was that day. Similar to the feeling of going back to the office the next day after 9/11 and everything changing, going back to the office the next day and going, we actually won. I went to an event that next morning, and everyone's like, "You worked yourself out of a job." And, I responded proudly, "We did. We really did win." The numbers now, the percentage in these states of how many are gay weddings, is just remarkable. It's amazing.

01-02:10:10

Meeker: I think, nationwide, it's about 10 percent.

01-02:10:12

Deutsch: I think it's a little higher than that now.

01-02:10:16

Meeker: That's phenomenal.

01-02:10:17

Deutsch: It is crazy. The lives that we have changed, the lives that we've protected, it's a legacy that I always will have, that I played a part in it.

01-02:10:34

Meeker: Shall we end?

01-02:10:36

Deutsch: Okay.

01-02:10:36

Meeker: All right. Great. Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]