

Interview with Mona Ezzat

2014

TAPE 1

Nicola Pratt (later NP.): Let me start off by asking you when and where you were born.

Mona Ezzat (later ME.): Should I just introduce myself as well?

NP. Yes, please, go ahead.

ME. My name is Mona Ezzat and I was born in Cairo in 1974. I'm currently working in journalism. I'm also active in civil society organizations and I'm a member of the New Women Foundation (NWF). I'm currently involved in founding the Bread and Liberty Party.

NP. Did you grow up in Cairo?

ME. Yes, I was born and raised in Cairo.

NP. What about your parents. What were their professions?

ME. My father was a freelancer and my mother was a housewife.

NP. What did you study?

ME. I majored in Literature.

NP. At Cairo University?

ME. Yes.

NP. During your time at university, did you join any student groups?

ME. Yes, of course. I didn't join a specific group per se, but I was generally interested in political life and the student movements. I also took part in some events, but not as a member of certain group.

NP. Were there certain issues you were especially interested in?

ME. When was in university?

NP. Yes.

ME. When I was in university I was interested in politics in general, but when I started writing journalistic articles in university, I was giving more attention to matter that have to do with

women's rights and other social issues concerning women. As a matter of fact, my first ever journalistic report was about divorced Egyptian women.

NP. Was that just a coincidence or were you always interested in women's issues?

ME. No, it wasn't a coincidence. Like I said, I was always interested in the situation for women in Egypt, so when I started doing journalistic work, I found that it was a great way to research and discuss women's issues with the experts. I think it came from my interest in social issues in general. I've always been interested in writing about culture and society.

NP. How did you find out about the NWF?

ME. I found out about the NWF through my journalistic work. As I was mostly writing about women's issues, my main source for information was women's organizations. I liked their ideas and their vision, so I started writing pieces for their newsletter: The New Woman Foundation Newsletter, and after that I regularly attended the events they would organize, not only for journalistic purposes, but also because I was personally interested. After a while, I became more involved in their work and joined their young women forum, at which I attended many events and even held some talks for the younger women there. After some time they asked to help found the campaign unit and that's how I started working at the NWF. This was in 2007.

NP. What did you do after graduating from university?

ME. Well, I was already working as a journalist during my time at university and continued doing that after graduation. I was also active at the Journalists' Union of which I was a member. During my time there, I helped found a committee for the defense of the Palestinian Intifada of September 2000. Then when the Change Movement (Taghyir) came along in 2003, we started Journalists for Change. We would work on issues relevant to our profession and the union having a bigger role in politics. This was in the first half of the 2000s. There were also other movements that I was personally interested in, such as the protests and the movements that were active at the time. So, I would take part in demonstrations and visits to other governorates and so on. So, I was politically active and in the union.

NP. Which year did you graduate?

ME. In 1997.

NP. During that time, were you part of any civil society group or any movements did you only start in the 2000s?

ME. I was involved in organized political work only after I graduated. When I was a student, I was only interested in politics and I would take part in some events. I only got into political work when I was a member of the union and it was when we started the committee for the Intifada. Before that, I was active within the union; defending journalists' issues and other activities within the union. I also ran in the union elections. I think that was in the second half of the 2000s, but I can't remember the exact year. I ran for election as part of the Independence

movement, which was a movement within the union. My unionist activism coincided with more interest in public and political affairs, which led to me being a member in leftist movements.

NP. During your time at the union, were you part of certain movement?

ME. Yes. There was a movement called the Independence movement, who were a democratic group that were defending the union's right to being independent and journalists' rights. So, the Independence movement was defending the union, because as you know there were problems within the union and all the protests were held in front the union. We were defending the union so that it would go on being a platform for freedom of expression and opinion and a place where political powers could have the freedom to express their opinions, because of the special position the union enjoyed. All the while, separating our demands from a partisanship. We were just defending the union so that it could continue you being the open space for expression of opinions and views. So, that's what the Independence movement was doing and I ran for a seat on the board of directors of one of the solidarity funds of the union as part of that movement and I won.

NP. Do you recall any laws that went into effect during that time?

ME. Yes, of course. We were fighting a proposed law which would allow the authorities to arrest journalists for publishing anything that includes criticisms of senior officials, or that alleges corruption in 2006. We even organized an emergency general assembly, in which I played an important part. We organized a demonstration at the House of Representatives and many demonstrations and sit-ins at the Journalists' Union, which coincided with a battle for the independence of the judiciary. Both events were taking place in close geographic proximity to one another. Abdel-Khalek Sarwat Street was at the center of the judges' movement and journalists' movement and we organized joint events for the two movements. We event hosted joint conferences for judges and journalists at the union to defend the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of the press. So, 2006 and 2007 were important years for these particular issues, especially to abolish the law that would allow the detention of journalists for criticizing senior officials.

NP. There was also another law in the nineties...

ME. Yes, you're referring to the 1995 law, but I wasn't a member of the union at that time. The battle regarding that law in 1995 was also a very important one. Some of the symbols or this movement – the movement for overturning law no. 93 of 1995 – were the ones who fought with is in 2006: Galal Aref, who had become the head of the journalist union by then, Yahya Allash, was a member of the council. During the time I was member of the union, some of the symbols of the 1995 movement were members of the council, and as members of the general assembly or a movement and they would open up the way for us to work within the union.

NP. During this time, were there other movements within the union?

ME. Of course. The Muslim Brotherhood had become quite strong, especially after they won 88 seats in the parliamentary elections in 2006. This gave a lot of influence and power, which they tried to exercise within many trade unions, including the journalists' union. The year I ran for election to the solidarity fund's board of director was the first time the campaign slogan "Islam is the answer" was used by a colleague, who was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. The history of the journalist's union had never known partisanship in this sense before. This was the first time the Brotherhood tried to make their presence strongly felt. Part of our battle was to counteract their growing influence within the union early on. We made it clear that we were against that campaign slogan and any other partisan slogans for that matter.

NP. So there wasn't any cooperation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the independence movement?

ME. No. I don't think there was any cooperation, but as you know that within the election game it isn't about coordination or cooperation. Sometimes you would vote for someone like, for example, Mohammad Abdel-Kuddous, who is a unionist and was the head of the freedoms committee, but he was open to the political parties, which is what made people trust him. His performance would make the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood or others seem unimportant. Also, in that time, the Muslim Brotherhood were part of the Change Movement (Taghyir). They would have their moments, but we would also work together. We worked together on the Intifada support committees and naturally there were some differences, because they are a strong opposition group. They also joined Kefaya. Also, every once in a while they would also try to exercise their political influence by, for example, making a deal with the government that would later be leaked and we would find out about. But at the end of the day, they were an opposition group and they were with us on the streets. So, there wasn't any cooperation in the sense of alliances or a state of animosity. Like I said, when they tried to use the slogan of "Islam is the answer" at the union we stood up to them and refused it. So, there wasn't any hostility or a refusal to cooperate. They were also present in the Doctor's union and we would coordinate the work of the trade unions together. Because they were members of the union council and would represent their unions. Things weren't in the state they are in now. Of course, not.

NP. Did you also take part in Kefaya?

ME. Yes. I was one of the first 300 to sign the first declaration. If you go online and type my name and Rabab Al-Mahdi, you'll see we were some of the first women... I think Aida Seif-El-Dawla, as well. You'll find a number of names, some of whom you've already interviewed, who attended the first meeting of Kefaya, at the time when it was just a group of 300 people. That's how I became part of the group, but I wasn't very active, because I was focusing my energy on my work and the battle we were fighting at the journalists' union, because the union had an important role at that time. So, I did take part in their activities, but I didn't attend their organizational meetings or take part in their planning. I did take part in the demonstrations and protests they would organize, but I was too busy with my organizational duties at the union.

NP. Were you part of the NWF during this time?

ME. Of course, in the 2000s, I was writing for their newsletter and attending the events they organized for the young women's forum. The coordinator of the forum would also invite me to speak at their events at times about political life. But I only started working there in an official capacity in 2007.

NP. Why in 2007?

ME. Well, when they started thinking of starting a unit for the standardization of campaigns of the foundation, they needed someone with experience in politics to handle it, because it was a lot of stress and campaigns and so on. It wasn't a typical desk job. So, they needed a sort type of person, who had political vision, an activist... I don't want to say fighter, but someone with a fighting spirit. Which is why they thought of me. They wanted someone who was interested in women's issue and at the same time knows about the world and politics that would be able to plan and campaign and things like that. So I started working with them in the campaign planning unit and I was in charge of a number of campaigns at the foundation, until the foundation started restructuring in 2013 and was divided into programs. Now, I am responsible for the Women in the Workplace program. I should mention though that I only work there on a "part-time" basis.

NP. Do you feel that there is a connection between your work in the field of women's issues and the union and political work?

ME. Women's issues are central to the society and are a social and political issue at their core. Hence, when you're working at your union or in politics – I joined some political parties after the revolution – you do it whilst having a kind of feminist awareness and according to a certain feminist vision, through which you try to highlight your role. When you're doing unionist or political work you have this feminist feeling. It becomes important for you to change the traditional view of women and not to just be present within these fields, but also to contribute in making others understand the importance of empowering and supporting women. So, when you are working at a union or in a political organization, having this sort of feminist vision is what sets you apart. At the NWF what we do is to try to instill this sense of feminism into the people that the foundation is targeting or working with. Outside the foundation, in my public work or in my journalistic writings this awareness is always there. So I didn't see that there was any contradiction with that. On the contrary, in the party I was in after the revolution, the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, and in cooperation with trade unions since I was heading the Women in the Workplace program, we tried to propose new ways of dealing with the concept women's committees and women's issues within political parties and unions. I started proposing new, untraditional ideas of dealing with idea of women working, whether in political parties or unions. So, on the contrary, I feel that my work at the NWF has contributed greatly to growing this sense of awareness in me and it even started to translate it into my political, unionist and even journalistic work.

NP. Would you like to say anything else about the time before the revolution?

ME. If I think of something, I'll let you know.

NP. What did you think when you saw the invitations to join the January 25th demonstrations? How did you feel?

ME. To be completely honest, I thought we were just going to take part in a demonstration and leave. I was at... By the way, I was with Dr. Aida Seif-El-Dawla... I was at conference with a journalist colleague of mine on January 25th and during the break we thought we would take a taxi and go down to the demonstration. Usually, they start at the journalists' union. On our way, the taxi dropped us off at the 6th of October Bridge - all this time, we were think that this was just a regular demonstration and that we would leave later on - and he told us that the police had closed off the street and that we would have to walk. We started walking and making jokes about why they would close the road. We just didn't realize that something big was going on. So, as we were walking down Abdel-Mon'em Riad Street towards Tahrir Square we found huge crowds of people. We thought, 'wow, a lot of people showed up!' and they were carrying signs about Tunisia; things like, 'Bin Ali, tell Mubarak that the plane and Saudi Arabia are waiting for you'. I met Dr. Aida there. The security forces were dealing very normally with us at that point. There had a concentrated presence, but they weren't harassing the people, but rather helping make way for people to pass and things like that. But there was a lot of them. We were used to this from the time of the demonstrations supporting the Intifada, but we hadn't really comprehended what was going on other than that it was a very big demonstration. Dr. Aida and I walked with the demonstrators down to the parliament and the crowd stood there for a while at which point my colleague, Midhat, and I decided to leave and go back to the conference and we thought it was a good demonstration and that people would leave soon. Later, we heard that people were sitting at the square and that some people had been attacked, so we went back to the Square after we finished our work and that was the beginning. People were sitting there and weren't going to leave; they were shouting out slogans and organizing sit-ins with more people joining them all the time. All this was on the 25th. Then on the 26th, more demonstrations started in the surrounding neighborhoods and the security forces were trying to break up the demonstrations and arresting some people. Then on Friday the 28th, things started to turn into a revolution. I always say, that we were in the middle of a revolution without realizing it. When we went down to the demonstrations on the 28th, it was the same. They said we were going to start demonstrations from a couple of points and so we went. I went down to Mustapha Mahmoud Street with Rula Darwish. We kept on walking while more crowds joined us until they started firing [25:31:07] at us at the Sheraton. We started going through some neighborhoods with more people joining us along the way. We kept on walking without knowing what was going on, until we reached the Qasr Al-Nil Bridge. There we saw huge crowds coming towards us and people were telling us that there other large crowd fighting with the security forces at the Qasr-Al-Nil Bridge. Of course, I didn't know what was going on, because the cellphone service was cut, but we stayed because we still saw people

coming. We could also see ambulances rushing people to the hospital, but we couldn't get to them, because of the huge number of people and we couldn't even ask anybody what was going on, because no one really knew. That went on till about 7pm, when they said... Then I saw a fire at the National Party building from the Qasr-Al-Nil Bridge. Then Tahrir Square was opened and they said that the army was deployed. All of this happened and we were [26:30:01]. That the army had been deployed and it was there now. People who were in demonstrations in other areas saw this and started to withdraw, because the army first went down to Tahrir Square and the surrounding areas, like Ramses Street. We started leaving and the people who weren't prepared for tear gas started leaving. I have an allergy against it, so I didn't want to risk anything, so I left. Later, I saw on television the situation we were in that none of us could see; that the army had gone down to the streets and we saw the battle at Tahrir Square. I had seen the fire from the Qasr-Al-Nil Bridge; we were standing on the bridge and we could see the National Party building burning. We went down the 29th and we heard that there had been clashes in some of the neighborhoods and that some police stations were raided. This we found out about through the media later on in the evening; were they were showing what was happening as merely violent demonstrations, but rather a comprehensive revolution. At that time there was no way of communication and the mobile network was cut. So, it was only in the evening that we found out that the situation we were in was the same as what was going on in all the other Squares and other governorates. That's how I got more involved in the revolution. I was there every day and sometimes I helped out with organizational matters. I also helped some people after the incident when some supporters of the Mubarak regime rode into Tahrir square on camels and horses and attacked the protestors. I would take over from people who would get tired from the organizational affairs and do some journalistic coverage. We would hold small meetings – the leftist groups- and decide on what we were going to do, how we would organize ourselves, if we were going to found a political party and how we were going to deal with the revolution, until we decided to form the Socialist Popular Alliance. I joined this party, which was based on the concept of diversity. I stayed at the party and got elected to its political office, which was the highest ranking committee of the party. I was in charge of the media department of the party, as well. But, June 30th created serious political differences within the party, so some of us had to leave the party and we founded a new entity we called the 'Bread and Liberty Party'. I am on its preparatory committee and we're working on the founding committee for the party.

NP. Why did you have to leave the Socialist Popular Alliance?

ME. Because, I have leftist leanings, as I have told you, and I have worked in politics before. [29:28:09] as organized leftists in a national left wing party, especially that, unfortunately, we had a critical view of old leftist parties. That they, sadly, decided to play a certain role, by being a kind of 'mock opposition'. So, we had some criticism over the political behavior of some of the leftist parties. We felt that if there was a strong leftist party that could bring together the scattered leftist groups, then we could have played a better role and helped more in the course of the revolution. Especially that the revolution, sadly, lacked any sort of leadership or strong

parties that could lead it. The old traditional parties, including Tagammu and the Wafd Party, were apprehensive to the idea of the revolution and weren't fully standing by it from the beginning. I think that was one of the biggest crises of the revolution. The one people who were organized enough to fill this vacuum were the Muslim Brotherhood. So, this is what we were thinking about and talking about all the time. The whole party was founded hastily on the 11th and we had our founding meeting in March or April at the Syndicate of Commercial Professionals. In ...

TAPE 2

ME. ...So there was an urgent need, because the party plays different roles. It's true I was active in women's issues, but the party has a wider range of work. The movements, such as Kefaya weren't the suitable form of organization for the political situation we were in. We would resort to that sort of organization or alliance because there weren't too many people or the movement was weak, so people would group together in order to be able to move forward. But now the revolution had opened up new possibilities. People are talking about overthrowing the regime and changing policies and this is the time for political parties to have a strong presence. That's why I joined a party. The reason I joined the Social Popular Alliance, because I am a leftist and a socialist.

NP. Can you tell me more about any activities you did within the party?

ME. As I told you, I was one of the people that founded it and I played an integral role in media communications for the party. But, I was also in the central committee of the party and inside the... At the beginning there was a founding committee, of which I was a member. I was in a leading position, so I could contribute in the forming of the general policies and planning the work and structure of the party. I also had a role in founding the party and visiting sites – the actual process of building the party. But, my responsibility was the media communication and responsibility of the party. I'm still with the party as a journalist, because of my contacts in the media sector and I can handle the press work, so even now in the new party, the Bread and Liberty Party, which is the new party that is still in the foundation phase, I play also a role in the founding process; we visit different governorates, invite people to join and meet with new groups. But, as I said, my main responsibility remains the media communications.

NP. What do you think of the media in Egypt after the revolution? After Mubarak left, I mean.

ME. There's a problem with Egypt media. Matters in Egypt are all... The democratic matter in Egypt are all sort of conventional; they're in a marginal democracy. There are no results from the political changes that are taking place. The emergence of satellite channels and independent newspapers was allowed because the state felt how suffocated the people felt. So, it allowed some "windows" so that the people could let out some of things that were

suffocating them. The state felt that people felt suffocated and wanted to give them more room to breathe, so they thought of a way that, without creating any unrest for them, could give the people some venting space and at the same time make the country appear more democratic. So, they thought of allowing independent newspapers, in which people can speak their minds and voice their opinions, but at the same time, there were some red lines. So, because the birth of these satellite channels and independent newspapers was unnatural, they were also playing contradicting roles at times, in the sense that they weren't very independent. They were also under the threat of censorship and being shut down. These capitals were mostly, especially the satellite channels and the bigger newspapers, belonging to Egyptian businessmen. If they were to cross any of the red lines, their investments and their livelihoods would be at stake. All this was restricting journalistic practices, with the absence of professionalism. Which is very unfortunate. I think the absence of professionalism was intentional, because if you want to have professionalism, free media and so on, you would keep it, to some extent, independent. But they wanted to bring loyalists and not competent professionals. This had an effect on a professional level and on the independence of the press. The press in many media outlets used to play a role closely linked to the fights that were going on higher up in the government between certain groups. Some newspapers were known to be associated with certain parts of the government and so on. This became very apparent in the January 25th Revolution. Because, all of a sudden, the regime, that many media agencies were linked to, started to collapse. So, they didn't know if they should be with the revolution or against the revolution. They didn't know what to do. So they were in a serious state of confusion. As a result, sadly, because of the inconsistency in political positions of many in the media community, they started to change their stands. As a result you started seeing a contradiction in the media outlets; one minute they'd be with the revolution and against the in the next. This got even worse after June 30th, because the media tools became a reflection of the political situation at the time. They were saying that the old regime was recovering and strengthening, while the Brotherhood was growing weaker. They, nor the Egyptian public, didn't deal with the Brotherhood as being the government. Egypt had more than 60 years – from the time of Abdel-Nasser until today – of central government. People would come and go, but there was always an establishment that people could see. It didn't matter who came or left – the establishment was always there. The Brotherhood were outside this establishment and they were dealing with it as something new, not the establishment that was deep roots, with influence on all the state institutions. That's why it was so easy to turn against completely once they fell, because they didn't feel that the Brotherhood was linked to any interests or doesn't have any roots in any [7:42:03]. The media went into the state of confusion we see now and became an instrument for the return of the old regime and attacking the revolution. That's why the media is in the sorry state it is in today, but this didn't just happen all of a sudden. This can be traced to the grotesque way it was created. We, unfortunately, didn't stand up to institutions, because we were hoping that their existence might open more windows for more progress, because the situation was really suffocating before that. We just kept silent and took the little that was given to us. The movements on the street weren't that strong either. Until

now, when the real roles that these media institutions play was revealed and their unnatural creation. So, of course the press and the media is bad now. They don't give information, they're politicized and they have no professionalism. It's really a miserable state. Except for a few that are trying to do something and have professionalism, such as Yusri Fouda and [9:29:05] Dawoud. I don't know if you watch some of the satellite channels, but you find ridiculous things. The professionalism is really low. You can tell that the presenters have received their orders and they just sit there delivering a monologue in a way that seems like he's yelling at the viewers. And you know what the press is like. We are thinking of starting some sort of publication, because the situation is so bad, but of course there are financial challenge that come with that. Nevertheless, we're still thinking of doing something.

NP. Can you tell me why you left the Social Popular Alliance?

ME. We had different opinions on how to move forward after June 30th. We, the people that left that left, did feel that the Muslim Brotherhood was a sectarian and violent group and that they weren't too different away from the terrorists in Sinai. But at the same time, we were worried that the country would use this to reinstate the old regime. I don't want the oppressive regime any more than I want the sectarian one. I'm not against the government playing a role in fighting the terrorism and violence in the society, but this shouldn't be done at the expense of freedoms and political change. But there was a group that felt that we needed to stand up to the Islamic movement. We already had a bitter experience with this in the nineties, when we allowed the government to fight terrorism, this led to the oppressive state we were in. When we allowed the security to thwart the Islamic movement, that led to the security forces expanding their reach and it got to a point where certain positions were held by them, the government became more oppressive and journalists were being court-martialed. This happened because we allowed it. We have a long history with oppression. So, it was dangerous to the revolution to accept this kind of thinking. And this is what happened; the law against demonstrating affected the political activists and youth. The constitution has paragraphs that limit freedoms, such as freedom of assembly and the freedom of association. There are problems in the current constitution; some institutions are getting immunities. There are problems happening now are because as I told you and I said during the June 30th events, that the army and the security forces are on our side not because they support the revolution, but because they are against the Brotherhood. This was the core difference with some members of the group. They were looking at things the same way the leftist parties were in the nineties. I am against the Islamists and I will ally with them. I was also against the leftist groups that did so in the Taghyir movement of 2005. [13:34:04], but we aren't allies. Our ideas are different than theirs. Our economic vision is different. Our views on discrimination, citizenship and democracy are different. So, we can't be allies. This was my position since 2005. But now we were standing in front of a state that wanted to go back to its oppressive ways, under the pretense of fighting terrorism. So, we had to preserve the democratic process. I'm not against the state fighting terrorism – of course not, but we have to preserve the democratic process. This was the point that we disagreed on and this made us go our separate ways. Now they started to see the truth

in what we said, now that political activists are being persecuted, people are being mistreated, the constitution they drafted contained elements that are dangerous to the stability of the country and so on. So, we were right.

NP. Can you tell me more about the agenda of the Bread and Liberty Party?

ME. We're still drafting our agenda, but we have a sort of founding document. If you can read Arabic, you can read it on our Facebook page. To summarize, we feel that there is a group of the people that took part in the revolution were calling for liberty and social justice and were therefore close to the ideas of the left, but without calling themselves leftists, that want to be active in public life. Our role is to try to be a voice for this group and be able to attract these people and these youth, and that can be political platform for them that can work with other groups to continue the course of the revolution; to build a real foundation for democracy and for the security forces not be involved in public life, the way it was before, the promotion of good citizenship and that people who have been left out of the political process, such as women, Christians and other become more involved, so that there are contributors to public life from all parts of society. This is what Egypt needs right now. We feel that we can do this as a party that is open to the different social groups, student movement, unions and so on. This can't just happen with a movement, this needs party that can incorporate all these things in comprehensive vision, create a unity between the movements, organize the people and that eventually runs in elections. We might not get to government at the time being, but we can be part of the parliament and have a clear opinion in the presidential elections and so on.

NP. And you are still doing the same work at the NWF as before, such as writing for their newsletter?

ME. Yes. Now, I'm also responsible for the Women at the Workplace project, where we work on the social and financial rights of women. So, I'm still there doing this and writing for the newsletter. But, to be honest with you, my work with the party has taken up time from my union work.

NP. I'm sure you're very busy. Can you tell me more about social and financial rights of women project you're working on?

ME. It's a program that focuses on women's issues. It's important for us for women to be involved in worker movements and help create women union leaders that can forward women's causes that can draft demand program for women's issues. We propose alternative policies from the perspective of social type. We also document the abuses by the government against the worker movements. So these three things: Creating leaders, proposing alternative policies and documenting the abuses against the worker movement. Also, drafting demand programs for the worker movement concerning women's rights.

NP. Do you feel that there is [18:20:08] for a special program for women? Why is there a program for women...

ME. Of course, because this linked to the situation of women in society. Women all through history have been victims of violence and discrimination. When women, or to be more specific, workers took part in the protests, women's issues, although women were present, were absent, because of the cultural and social influence, which perpetuates the violence and the discrimination against women. When the unions were formed [19:03:02], women representation was very low. Hence, you have to work on changing this culture and also state policies. The state does not adopt any policies for the empowerment of women. They talk about women's rights, but take no action to empower them. So, we have to continuously work on this until you change this reality

NP. Last question: I didn't quite get why you are interested in politics? Was it because of your father or someone in the family?

ME. No.

NP. How did you get in to this field?

ME. From reading books. I read all the way through high school. Like many other, I would read a lot of different books during summer vacation. You'd go to the library and certain books will catch my eye and you'll find out that some of the things you read are similar to your own thoughts. You find out that you are against oppression, tyranny and exploitation. I told you that at the start of my journalistic career, I was very occupied with how people form their traditions and their leanings and the way society view women. I was always thinking how certain people's social class affects their traditions and customs. I was always thinking about this and the fact that people's awareness is formed from the input they get from education, culture and social and economic class. All this was worrying all the time. With more time and more reading, my leftist thinking started to crystallize. I was biased towards the working classes and so on. The way you interact with the theory changes constantly during your work in the real world. So, my political progress wasn't just formed through reading, but the reading was what made me want to be close to the leftist movements at university and the leftist students, keeping an eye on what they were doing, reading their writings and discussing with them. When I left university, I had this drive to defend people's interests. Even in my writings, as I told you, I was always interested in writing about social matters and the situation of women. Why the situation was the way it was? Why should I be denied the ability to work? Why do I need to fight to have a curfew after 7pm. The different forms of oppression and exploitation, what causes them, how they are changing and why they are different in different places in the world always interested me. I felt that I wasn't doing anything wrong by being active in public life, so where did these customs and traditions come from? My awareness by being involved. The reading and the engagement went hand in hand. My work in the NWF brings me closer to working on women's issues and makes me read more about feminist theory. Journalistic works helps you keep a sharp eye on developments in the world and you meet a lot of people. The work experience, the reading and being involved in union life all this all helps you grow and develop. It makes your simple leanings that you had in high school of university; being against all forms of

exploitation and supporting social justice also develop when you work in the real life situations. I always say that my socialist leanings are because of these feelings I have about being against oppressions and exploitation and when you go and meet and talk to the poor you realize what a big effect some economic policies have in them. Through interaction with people you realize that there is a connection between what you feel and believe and what the theories in books say. That's why I am a leftist.

NP. Thank you very much.

ME. You're welcome. After revising what you have taken down, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. How long are you staying in Egypt?

NP. Another two weeks.

ME. So, if you have anything more you'd like to ask you can let me know

NP. Thank you.