

An Interview with

Pat Cox

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Oral History Program

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PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

Pat Cox: My name is Pat Cox.

Malaika Horne: And you already know my name, Malaika Horne. This is a oral history project about women as change agents and what we're doing is interviewing women who we feel have made important contributions, not only to this particular region, but other places. So we want to just have a conversation with you about your life, your career, anything else. So, first off, I'd like for you to talk about your family: your parents; your siblings; your children; your husband; any other relatives. Tell us about your family.

Pat Cox: Okay. My family of origin included my mother, my father, my sister and me. My father was born in 1911 in rural South Carolina and he met my mother, who was born in 1914 in Michigan, she of German ancestry, he of rural South. They met and courted in New York City during the Depression and they married in 1935. My sister was born in '37 and my dad had been in the Army, left the Army and when all of this stuff happened at the start, he was invited to try out for officer candidate school because he had left the Army as a corporal. So he did that and spent the rest of his career in the Army. I say that because we moved a lot. My sister was born before the war, as I said, and I was born in '49, after the war and Dad was gone in India, in the occupation of Japan. He came home long enough to have me and then went back to Korea.

Malaika Horne: So he was in World War II?

Pat Cox: He was in World War II and the Korean War and then in the...I was born in '49. By the mid '50s, he was stationed in Turkey with NATO. He was a signal corps guy. Nobody ever talked about that but what I know is, Turkey was a NATO member and this was an enterprise watching Russia, watching the Soviet Union.

Malaika Horne: So when he retired, what was his rank?

Pat Cox: He was a major and they continued to be pretty itinerant until I was in late elementary school. So I moved almost every year of my life and my sister, when we lived in Turkey, I was six and she was a senior in high school.

Malaika Horne: Okay, so she was much older than you?

Pat Cox: Yes. So we made a trip back recently to Mazhar, my view and her view of what we had.

Malaika Horne: So you lived in Turkey?

Pat Cox: We lived in Turkey when my dad was stationed there in NATO. We lived with him, my mom, my sister and I, on the economy, as they say in the military, which meant we had an apartment in Ankara.

Malaika Horne: So talk about your youth, anything that jumps out.

Pat Cox: So, I grew up in what I call a mixed marriage because my mother was a Northerner and my father was a Southerner. My mother was...that side of the family is all of German heritage and my father was a rural Southerner. He was extremely race-conscious. I never knew him to say anything derogatory about anyone and we had African American officers' family in our house in Turkey because, of course, Truman integrated the service. So when I look back over my family life, I see glimmers of the history of the United States. So my mother, being of German background, they lived with World War I. They came over in the 1880's, both of the sides...all the sides, and they lived through World War I and World War II with the anti-German feeling. In fact, I think that feeling started just after the turn of the 20th century which is why in Forest Park you find that statue of Fritz Siegel raised by the German community that remind folks that we fought in the Civil War on both sides for this country. So I grew up, because I listened to stuff, I grew up more concerned about my responsibility as a child of German heritage for what happened in World War II than my focus on the Southern heritage and my responsibility for the terrible hundreds of years for African Americans. But the two intertwined pretty quickly.

Malaika Horne: What about elementary and secondary schools you attended?

Pat Cox: We moved a lot so at the beginning, Army schools so there were all kinds of kids, and then my mom and dad got a small mobile home and we traveled around and I would go to whatever school was there, which, again, was variety and they would also send me to whatever church was nearby. So I got a pretty ecumenical...I mean, they only intervened when once an Asian Baptist church wanted to...whole immersion baptize me, they kind of intervened to say I was already baptized. But I did Bible school, I did all of that stuff and in 1958, after my dad retired, I was in 3rd

grade and we took this little mobile home and drove down to Guadalajara, Mexico on roads that were not...and where there were no bridges and my parents did not have Spanish and so I saw them persevere and I thought, oh, okay, well, you can persevere. So that's the kind of childhood I grew up in.

Malaika Horne: So when you were growing up, what did you want to be? Did you think about that, about your career, your future?

Pat Cox: Yes. So I was good in school. In fact, school was all I had. We moved so much that the library and the school were the only constants and when we moved to a new community, we'd get a library card and go to school. But I never quite fit in, right, because I was either coming or I was going. So I spent a lot of time watching and thinking. My sister did not go to college. She went to business school which meant that she became a secretarial. She got secretarial skills. She taught me how to write a good letter, how to write a proper letter, et cetera and she's wicked smart but she didn't go to college. And so, here I was, 12 years later and that seemed to be in the cards but I was the first one. My dad had gone to officer candidate school and my mother had gone to nursing school but the idea of a four-year college, nobody else I knew had that.

Malaika Horne: And did you mention your sister's name?

Pat Cox: My sister is Barbara and Barbara, she was my hero growing up. She passed down her old records. So I discovered that...I was listening to PBS one night while I was doing stuff on the computer and they were doing the '60s and the '50s, of the whatever, and I knew the '50s because that was her time, right, and I knew the '60s some too, but the '50s, I was like, whoa. She married a military gent and she figured, in my later time, because when I was 14...well, so when I was in 5th grade, we moved to Southern California. We'd gone from Arizona to Sacramento to Southern California and I started out in what turned out to be, if you will, the color line in this town in Southern California. This was the '50s where the Hispanic people lived on the north side of the main drag. This was pre-freeway and the other folks lived on the south side and we moved there. For the first year, we lived on the north side and so I went to an essentially all Hispanic school, which, again, was a...and I learned about that side of town and then we moved to the south side and then I reunited when we got to junior high and high school. So I grew up having

these experiences that let me know that many people lived very different lives and that that was important, even though I didn't know much about what to do about it.

Malaika Horne: And your parents' names?

Pat Cox: My father's name is William, last name, Cox. The joke is that when my late husband and I married, when my husband Graham and I married, my late husband John Butler, my husband Graham Coldit, that we all kept our maiden names. So he was called Bill or, his Southern relatives, they called him W.S. because he was not initially given a name. He was given initials and when he went into the Army, the recruiter said, "Boy, to enter this man's Army you got to have a name. What's your name? Those are initials," and so he took his father's name, which was William Sidney.

Malaika Horne: And your mother's name?

Pat Cox: Esther Dobreath Cox and she was the eldest; my father was the youngest and I grew up eating sweet potatoes and sauerkraut at the same meal. It was definitely a...and they would have arguments and she would say, "You know, if you didn't want a woman who knew her own mind you, you should have married one of those Southern women but from what I've learned about Southern women," she'd say, "it's iron fists and velvet gloves"

Malaika Horne: And your children?

Pat Cox: We have two children. They have their first father's last name. He died at 45 when they were just shy of 9 and 5 so Graham has never claimed to be their dad but he knew John and was great friends and knew the kids and over the years they have claimed him and it's just really an amazing thing to watch.

Malaika Horne: Graham Coldit is your husband?

Pat Cox: Yes, is my husband.

Malaika Horne: What does he do?

Pat Cox: He is a research epidemiologist. He's a physician who saw as a medical student that it would probably make more sense to get ahead of symptoms and to get ahead of symptoms, you need to have public health

and you need to know how to get ahead of the symptoms. His dad was a physician but he did not want to spend his career with people showing up when you could have intervened earlier.

Malaika Horne: And he's originally from Australia?

Pat Cox: He's originally from Australia and my late husband was a developmental psychologist. He'd served in the Peace Corps and that had informed his life, lived in Peru for two years and then trained Peace Corps volunteers in Mexico. So he was very comfortable in Spanish and, had he lived, our children would have better command of another language, but that didn't happen.

Malaika Horne: I want to get back to your childhood, when you were growing up. Were you recognized as a leader?

Pat Cox: So, I was recognized as bright, not initially, for which I'm grateful because I'd met all kinds of kids but by the 6th grade, I was in what I presume is an accelerated classroom. The sense I got at home...I'm mean, I've always been outspoken in my family, much to the chagrin of my parents. My sister never said what she thought and I left no doubt and my mother said something to me early on which conveyed to me a sense that I think probably is for...it's why, as a mother, I've tried to be very careful for what I say to my children because you can say something that was probably off-hand but it can just be in your kids' life, right, and so one time she said to me...she said two things to me. One, she said to me that I was a leader on the playground and I would lead other kids around and when they got tired of that, I would think of something else and then lead them around again. She also gave me the distinct impression...I'm not remembering the words right this second but sort of keeping on from that, that leadership, it was a form of manipulation in her book, especially as practiced by a girl maybe and she used to say that I always had a lot of time because I took everybody else's time and that also stuck with me and I realized that a lot of life is about self-management, is learning self-management skills and if you have a gift, learning to manage the down side of that gift as well as the up side. So that's been probably a slight motif of my life.

Malaika Horne: So you were encouraged inside the home, it sounds like it...

Pat Cox: Encouraged to be a good student but this leadership thing, don't...it's typical women things, right?

Malaika Horne: What about outside the home?

Pat Cox: Outside the home, I was encouraged. I don't remember, in elementary school having formal leadership positions but I clearly could speak my mind. I watched the women in my family who, despite the fact that my mother said that, she spoke her mind. She really might have been a good doctor but that was not the time and place and that just didn't happen but she kept on learning and she didn't back down. My aunts and uncles, my uncle especially, all of these folks are just really important people in my life, my mother's side of the family, and to some extent, my dad's but not so much. She really stepped in and stood up for people, like my uncle who stepped on a land mine on D-Day and had a leg amputated and right after the war when you had to go to the VA hospital and my aunt once described them sitting with my mother at the VA hospital and it was a Saturday and two doctors walked by and they were talking about their golf game and they couldn't wait to get out on the golf course and my mother just laid them out and said, "We have been sitting here for hours." My grandmother, she was a...for her...so different generations have different issues. For my grandmother, it was religion; for my parents, I think it was race and just all kinds of...religion, not so much, and not an issue but just what was on the horizon, race and other ethnicities, other ways of not being packaged exactly like you think you are. Then, my question growing up was, "Well, so what's going to be..." ...and I thought early on that it was going to be sexual orientation and that I needed to be prepared to have children, and what if. Am I rambling too much?

Malaika Horne: No. Any other early influences?

Pat Cox: Just family and the Southern family who told great stories. My dad was a great storyteller. He could just talk till the cows come home and I got that from him. My mother was sort of a fire brand but he could tell the story. He was a very good athlete. He was very aware of spatial relations, not getting too close to people, far away, watching so that you didn't step in other people's space and he was the one who turned me on to history, that everybody had a story. They both indicated early on that everybody's a treasure. I definitely got that feeling and so when we were

in Turkey, I remember him showing me crusader graves and said, "Turkey's been run over by civilizations forever and these folks came on one of their...trying to have things their way kind of thing and here they lie and there are people all over." We found the Romans; we found the Greeks, and the original Turkish people, the Turk men, the Syrians. His first gig in the Army, after basic training, was getting shipped through the Panama Canal and spending three years in Hawaii, which is nothing but different people. And so he just...

Malaika Horne: That's the most multi-cultural state in the country.

Pat Cox: And it wasn't a state. This was 1933 so the man just...his eyes were like this most of his life and then getting sent to India and then getting sent to Japan and then getting sent to Korea. I think he was wide-eyed all his life.

Malaika Horne: What about in college?

Pat Cox: So, high school, I did well, I got leadership things, I went to Girl State but a broad strand was my parents and I remember when I was in 10th grade, my government teacher at one of the parent/teacher evenings, it was my government teacher who I later realized was a Stanford graduate. I had no idea what that meant. I just didn't know; I didn't know, but even then...this is the early '60s kind of thing, middle '60s, he told my parents that I was somebody who could go back East to college and I didn't exactly know what that meant but I suspected it meant that I could go to...you knew that there were these colleges back East and my father looked at him and said, "First she has to learn how to come in out of the rain," in other words, for any education you get, you also have to have common sense. I remember sort of going, "You go, Dad." He heard it but he wasn't...and the government teacher, I'd never seen his jaw drop and I thought, okay, that's another tradition talking to this man and that's probably a good thing. When I was in junior high, I missed the first term of 9th grade, which was in junior high then because I went to stay with my sister and brother-in-law in Germany. It was 1963, the Berlin Wall was just going up and they were building fences...they were in Northern Germany so they weren't in Berlin and they weren't in the American zone; they were in the British zone and so it was very different and I could see, my brother-in-law, I didn't know what he did but he was in intelligence so presumably they were doing...there were leaflets being dropped back and forth and you could see the people on the other side

but they were cut off now and it's astonishing to me, when you think that, really, that was '63 and by '89 the wall was down. That's only 36 years. That is, in the scheme of human history, no time but at that time it seemed like a...and that was a place where I fell off the wagon of being sort of a rah-rah...if I was, I don't think I was a rah-rah American because when my chores were done, my sister had had her second...they had their second child so I was 14, I was helping and when I got all my chores done, I was free to go roam the city and I met a girl my age and she invited me home to dinner and with my sister's permission, I went back another night and went to dinner and I'm sitting at dinner with her family and I've got my little German and some English and we're piecing it together and her dad says to me...this is 1963..."I was in America once" and I, not knowing didley, said, "Oh, did you have a good time?" and he said, "Well, it was a pretty good time. I was in a prisoner of war camp," and I went to myself, holy shit match, nobody told me. I had no idea. At that point in my life, I had no idea about internment camps for Japanese Americans; I had no idea about prisoner of war camps. It turned out my French teacher, Mrs. Glepowich in high school had been a warden in a prisoner of war camp in the United States. I knew nothing and our history told us nothing and I was pissed. I was pissed that my country hadn't prepared me to go and be overseas. So this is 1963, this is the Civil Rights movement back in the U.S. I knew very little except that what was going on in my home town was a lot like civil rights: the swimming pool, you could only swim on Friday evenings if you were Hispanic because they would drain the pool and fill it up for the weekend. I mean, just go on from there. It was like that. Here I am, 14 in Germany and I am listening to Germans, right, and I'm 14, I'm a military kid, I'm a "yes, ma'am," "no, ma'am," "yes, sir," "no, sir" kind of person, raised that way. I'm still that way at my advanced age. And Germans would say to me, "Vell, you have this problem vith the black people in the United States" and I didn't know what to say. As a 14-year-old child, I couldn't say anything to elders but I thought, well, hello! At least we're talking about them and, hello, you don't exactly have a really good record at addressing differences among people." So anyway, so I bottled all that up and I went home and went to high school and kept learning and then went to college.

Malaika Horne: Where did you go to college?

Pat Cox: I went to the University of California, Santa Cruz, in its third year. '65/'66, '66/'67, I entered in September of '67. It was either the height or the depth of the '60s, depending on how you view the '60s. Santa Cruz had a lot of educated white folks, young people who were getting off the escalator of upward mobility or whatever and I was among the folks who were trying to find the escalator or the stairs. I didn't feel I had the wherewithal to just go off. I had a responsibility to my family to be educated because that's why I was there, right? So I went through Santa Cruz in kind of a bifurcated mode. I had an activist mode and I had a traditional mode and Santa Cruz, the college, brand new in the system...when I said it was its third year, it was the brand new campus with brand new colleges. I was in the Adlai Stevenson College which was all about social justice and governance.

Malaika Horne: What was your major?

Pat Cox: My major was...and they sound redundant but my majors were community study which was the activist side, and sociology which was the traditional side and I had two mentors, each from that tradition and they fought and yelled at each other in the academic senate. They didn't get along at all but I got a complete education and more from each of them. So I had a number of amazing mentors. The most significant for me in my life long was an African American professor named Jay Herman Blake. He's in the East. I have not seen him since I graduated. I wrote to him for the first time about four years ago to thank him and just say, "I just want you to know how important you were" because I realized, as you grow older, you realize that the people who were young once weren't that much older. My high school teachers were very important. My English teacher was, like, 21 or 22. I mean, this was the early '60s where it was all opening out and California was being settled and there were brand schools with all these really great women, especially, who hadn't yet left teaching to go into other fields, which is what happened by the '70s and '80s where fields were opening up.

Malaika Horne: This is a good opportunity to ask you a question that we ask each of our interviewees: Going back 50 years, we ask the interviewee, what do you think you would have been doing 50 years ago or another way of looking at it is, your grandmother, what would you have been doing decades ago?

Pat Cox:

And you asked me what I thought I wanted to be, too, so the two are linked. So, neither of my maternal grandparents finished elementary school. They left after 3rd grade but they knew enough...my grandmother wrote stream of consciousness letters her entire life to all her far-flung family and she, as I said, was a force to be reckoned with. So you can imagine...but I realized she kicked the traces a bit because one of the things she did in the '20s was to get her hair bobbed, which was pretty radical for somebody who was the daughter of immigrants. She was born in this country but her older sister wasn't and so you look for the spots where women have stood their ground. I never got to ask her about voting. Obviously I talked with our 93-year-old aunt about it. My mother, likewise, she should have been a doctor. She had those kind of questions but she kept growing and she went back to work when I got to be in high school. Part of the challenge for me was, I knew I was meant to go to college but the only message I got from my parents was that I was supposed to be happy, which is really not a very...it's a good thing but it's illusive, first of all, and I got the sense that I needed to be able to make a living, but I also got the sense from them that they didn't think I had enough common sense to be able to make a living. So I had this, I need to go figure out...but I started working for my home town newspaper when I was 15. I did what was called "vacation relief" so I did every different job in this five-day-a-week newspaper and what an education that was! And I found I could write. And so writing turned out to be something that I thought, okay, well, probably I can turn a buck on that sometime, don't know how. I decided in college I didn't have the wherewithal to be a newspaper person because I couldn't stand on people's doorsteps and essentially collar them when they left. Nowadays it's a microphone but in those days it was...so interviewing, research which is most of what I've done in my life, is I started out interviewing. In my home town newspaper, they put me out interviewing newcomers and people who had interesting jobs. So I'd write these very long things that often went in unedited because they could fill the space with people who had different jobs and I realized, as I think you had suggested you do that most people don't think they're interesting but once you get them talking, you can come away with a bazillion pages of stuff to write about.

Malaika Horne:

So what do you think your career or occupation has been?

Pat Cox: So I did research, I did evaluation, I did consulting. Really, if I had to say what the theme...and this is where St. Louis has been just an enormous, wonderful place for me...is...so when you're young, I think you think that if something's wrong, all you have to do is point it out and people will go, "Oh, my bad. Let me get about correcting that." Well, what you realize is that just saying something doesn't...people don't hear it and so a lot of my work was in trying, towards the end of my formal career, was trying to find ways of asking questions, of saying things, of structuring so that people could learn from it, could take it aboard. So, for example, when you do an evaluation, it's usually program evaluation. It's usually evaluation paid by a third party and what the third party wants to know is, did the program work and in one really important piece we did, we got permission from...it was for the State of Maine, we got permission from the Department of Education to tell the story from the point of view of the journey of the schools. So we did an entire timeline from their point of view, of when they started, which was years before the state funds came through and then when the state funds came through and then where they were and it helped put the program in its place, it talked about what the program had helped with but it also gave credit to the efforts of people for sometimes 10 years before, to be working on building a truly learning centered school, for example.

Malaika Horne: So, what was the name of this organization you worked for?

Pat Cox: So I worked for a non-profit called The Network Incorporated that did educational research, evaluation and consulting and then we competed and won one of the federally funded regional educational laboratories and our region was the northeast, so New England, New York and the Islands, which, of course, everyone always thought was, like, Martha's Vineyard and Block Island but it turns out it's the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico because it's Federal Region One.

Malaika Horne: So where was this organization located?

Pat Cox: It was located in Andover, Mass and after I went to college, I worked for a couple years afterwards, for at least a year. I worked in a school, in the library program. I had charge of the entire...on a library aid's salary...because they didn't have a library and I had the library program but no access to the library which was being used for a classroom and I

then applied and was accepted in graduate school. So I went back to Boston to go to graduate school at Harvard.

Malaika Horne: So what was your major?

Pat Cox: My major was in sociology.

Malaika Horne: So you have a Master's in sociology?

Pat Cox: So I have a Master's in sociology because I stopped out. I did my generals and I had designed a thesis topic that was going to involve working with people from four schools. It was on the history of schoolhouse design. It was going to be Sociology, the School of Education, the School of Design and the School of Architecture which was, at the Ph.D. level is a good way to be drawn and quartered. By then I'd married and my husband got a great job offer in Washington so I stopped out and I never quite got back. What I had learned to that point was that my mentors there who were significant, none have been as significant as Jay Herman Blake. They wanted to create people in their own image so their trajectory and the whole reason I was there was to become a college professor but they also let me know they didn't think it was exactly possible and there were a couple of women who have been great out of that program, a couple years older, but I can remember in the elevator when I was late actually buying...even though I didn't have much money...a sandwich because I was starving and a demographer saying to me...holding up his bagged lunch...saying, "What you need is a wife."

Malaika Horne: We all need that.

Pat Cox: Yeah, we all need something.

Malaika Horne: Tell me about Jay Herman Blake. Why was he so influential?

Pat Cox: So Jay Herman Blake taught a course on...I don't even remember what it was called...the African heritage experience, I would call it and it may have been two courses. I don't even know. But I do know that we read widely. We read everything from The Invisible Man to...well, just everybody. But I guess it was another course, we read the contemporary African literature that was coming out, from Nigeria and other places. He had a dual location program where young white folks went out, the men to Delfusky Island where Jay Herman Black was born and raised.

Malaika Horne: Where is that?

Pat Cox: Delfusky is one of the sea islands, it's in South Carolina but it's one of the...by the time I moved East, the beginnings of Hilton Head had...not on that island but across and it was...anyway...

Malaika Horne: What does that mean, "It was..." ...what?

Pat Cox: Well, Hilton Head is a white resource and the boats of the African American fishermen were getting swamped by the motor boats of the extra privileged white folks and then he also had a program that placed people for a term in North Richmond, California which was...and I believe still is...essentially...it was at the time 99.9% African American. There were two Japanese truck farmers who lived there and I spent not just a term but two terms, so I spent six months working on helping people acquire journalism skills. And in order to...remember, this is the height of the depth of the '60s so everybody is dressing...I went home for my first Christmas with a torn Amy blanket. My parents were horrified and Professor Blake said, "You will be respectful. You will dress appropriately. You will conduct yourselves out of respect for the people you're with. None of this, torn this and that, no." So he trained folks up, good and proper like.

Malaika Horne: It sounds like he was a great mentor?

Pat Cox: He was really good and he is really good.

Malaika Horne: I want to get back to your career, work life balance and this is usually an issue with women, we have so much that we have to balance, with our family, our work, other things.

Pat Cox: Right.

Malaika Horne: How do you do that? How do you manage that?

Pat Cox: So, I have not intruded the words white privilege to this point except for Hilton Head but one of the other strands through this is the leeway that I had to move about...even though I was a woman and I was aware that there were constraints that folks wanted to impose...I had otherwise an open field and that was not lost on me. I didn't know the words but I was very aware of it. I worked part-time until my late husband died, as a safety plan with the notion that women need to be able to earn a living

and I always framed it as, I had a dance card. I just didn't fill up the dance card the whole way, dance cards being something that I learned about from my parents or whatever where you went to dances and people signed up to dance with you or something. I don't know. That was just a...but anyway, that was how and when he died, I was able to earn a living, which turned out to be pretty crucial. At the very same time, I've always had...and it's a strand in my mother's side of the family...I've always had a tendency to mania and depression and it suited work on deadline. If it coincided with the manic phase, that was really good; not so good for depression and as I got older...I used to be able to harness and just get it happened, I got more chaotic and I realized, especially as I had kids, that it was likely that that strand was going to continue and that I better learn how to manage it rather than having it manage me, because that's what was exceedingly happening. So I worked a career. Before we came to St. Louis, I had...because my parents were getting older, I had gone out as a freelancer so I did freelance work and that allowed me to travel for kids and for parents who needed more help and it dawned on me...because even though you don't think of yourself as all that, you get caught up, that 99% of the work I was doing, I could do without traveling, without moving my body around, that there was, "Thank you very much," plenty around me and so before, while we were still in Boston, before we moved to St. Louis, I became hyper liberal with the notion that if I couldn't find a way to do something to be of use, not savior, not whatever, but something to be of use, like a potter does a well turned bowl. Bowls are useful, that I was just not looking hard enough and so that's what I had started to formulate myself as. Then we moved to St. Louis and Graham and I decided that our number one priority was electing a president that we thought would be good for the country, we could be proud of and so I devoted the first part of our time here volunteering and I ended up going to different cities because I...I call myself a street worker because I like to do door-to-door; I like to do voter reg. I don't like to go to the fancy fundraisers. I'm not cut out for that. We give as we're able. I want to be out there talking and listening to people. So I had the wild experience of going to places, to African American neighborhoods in Canton, Ohio and Evansville, Illinois and early on trying to...because I thought I was going to be a Hillary. I was going to be a Hillary supporter, we both did and then we started hearing about Mr. Obama and Hillary was not answering the question of what was going to

happen with Mr. Bill. I was finding it hard to forgive Mr. Bill for not keeping his pants zipped. I'm sorry...you know? And so every time there was a commercial for Hillary like the one at 3:00 A.M. where she said, "Who do you want to most be answering the phone?" I just kept having her have a fight trying to get to answer with Mr. Bill and say, "I know that guy. Just let me answer," and I thought it was going to be one scandal after another that was going to make her unable to govern if she got elected. So I went to Evansville, I went before our primary in St. Louis, Missouri, I went to Evansville, I went to Ohio, to work the primaries because the Clinton's had everything sewed up so we had to organize from the ground up. So it turned out that folks like us from the '60s...because I demonstrated in the '60s, I did anti-war stuff, I was out there...I went to Washington, our notion that things can change between civil rights and the war has turned out to be enormously useful to a younger generation who hadn't seen...and some of the old school skills like, if you don't have a computer and you don't know the...there's the Yellow Pages; there's the White Pages. You can use that and find people. So I was going through African American communities and some middle-class communities. African American communities had middle-class and other folks as well, the more upscale, there were some African Americans but mostly non-African Americans and people were going, "We're Hillary people" and I would say, "Well, you know, I really feel like an idiot as a while person standing here saying but we think this man has legs so give him a look."

Malaika Horne: So you moved to St. Louis...

Pat Cox: 2006, and I was back and forth transitioning and getting people...I don't even remember what exactly was happening with kids but there was college, and then parents and all of that and I was taking care of parents, going and seeing them every six weeks, from 1995 so there was lots going on but by late 2007, I was doing pretty much Obama punctuated with going to see parents. Then, it was such an amazing...I mean, the pulling together of that, it really was a coalition, of all kinds of people, was...I was like, look at this, look at this. This is happening and we figured out some moves that are really useful because two things one needs to know about political campaigns is that they waste money and they waste time. They just spend people's time and people's time is about all they got most of the time. So by the end of the Obama campaign, I was realizing I needed

to sign my good buddies who had dance cards that were almost entirely filled most of the time, like my good friend, Malaika and my good friend, Kim. I had to sign them up way ahead of time. So I signed you up for stints on Election Day and I was saying to the young professional people, the people in law school, "Give me two hours either once or two hours every couple weeks and consider it a layaway plan. You give me two hours, I'll give you a president at the end." So we got really good people for tiny times as well as people, like me, who had arranged my schedule. That's how I got to be the team leader in Ward 17 for Obama. It wasn't because I had skills. I had time.

Malaika Horne: I want to ask you questions about leadership, skills and style, but I've got to put this in here: Tell me about your children now. Then I want to go back to leadership. What are they doing now?

Pat Cox: Okay, our son just turned 36. He is an assistant professor at the University of Texas now. He's a psychologist. He does learning and memory. He is on the experimental side and his wife, Anne, is a public health person. My husband, Graham, when we first met her the night before she was going to go away to France for a summer abroad. Andy introduced us and we thought, "Oh, well" and she used the word "population" in a public health sense and that was what Graham said when we left, was, "She knows how to do that." So she's a public health person and they have two little children and they live in Austin, Texas. Our daughter just turned 32. She was a women's study person. She is much more of the sociologist, et cetera. She and her girlfriend, Annie, live in Boston, MA. She's a tech person and both of them were great athletes and for Louisa being a great athlete helped her because she had some learning challenges, helped her have the foundation of self-confidence to battle the different way her mind worked. And so they both made their way and I was determined, when their first father died, that they would not be victims because when your dad dies when you're a little kid, people either make you the man of the family or they go, "Oh, poor you."

Malaika Horne: I want to get in some really good questions here. So one I was alluding to was leadership lessons and your leadership style. I think it came through when we were talking about the campaign but anything else you want to...

Pat Cox:

So, the whole life that has opened up to me in St. Louis by being very local is that we started out getting our hair cut, going to pharmacies, doing everything as much, either within ward or within zip code. So that's how I started volunteering and just going about my business and learning. By April of 2009, Evelyn Rice Poebels, Kim Everline and I had gotten together and we decided to found the Women's Group on Race Relations and we have grown that over time with the idea of having every single gathering as what I would call a fractal where it has all the principles that we would like to see come about in St. Louis and for our fellow women so they have always been 50/50 gatherings of African American women and white women and other women of color and the goal that people leave energized, challenged and where women have the air time, it's not being lectured at and I've been searching, I realize, all my life for, what are the skills that white people need to have to be able to practice being a useful person in bringing about the beloved community, not just dismantling racism, but the beloved community that Dr. King talked about. So I realized that the social justice community, which I revere, which are people who have spent their lives, it has a tendency to be self-referential and I wasn't seeing any evidence of getting beyond to people who were oblivious or unknowing or just had an interaction. So I realized, just like I realized that saying to people, "Oh, here, guess what? This is what you're doing wrong," wasn't going to work. Being a fierce activist wasn't going to work with white people either. It shut people down. You weren't going to get anywhere and that's where I was really trying, from 2009 and in 2011, Amy Hunter at the YWCA, founded two groups, one for people who identified as of color, to heal and to address internalized racism, and the one for people who identify as white, to address white privilege and learn about white supremacy, white history, et cetera, and learn skills for not only working with people of color, because that's what everybody comes in thinking, that "we're going to go out there," getting beyond the savior notion, getting out the...just getting out of the way of people of color and dismantling the laws and all of that. But the real job is with white folks. There are not enough people of color and they've been doing it for 450 years, to get to all the white people. And so that is what I've spent the last five years, along with all the other...you know, taking care of kids...you know, doing this, doing that, and it allows me to do the work I need to do because so much of what you need to do is in the moment and the groups we have for witnessing

whiteness is helping people practice what they would do in the moment to open the conversation out and not shut it down and to remember, if it's an ongoing relationship, you have more than one chance. You don't have to cure the people. It's not contagious. You don't have to separate yourself out from these racist people just because you're now enlightened and even if it's not a...you don't have another chance. You can say something that plants a seed that may flourish later but you have to get over the adrenaline rush that happens when a white person says something racist or politically incorrect or whatever, to be able to say, "What is my role here?"

Malaika Horne: In the last minute, what is the name of that group again? Say it again.

Pat Cox: So it's the Women's Group on Race Relations in St. Louis, is the first one, the WGRR.

Malaika Horne: And it still exists?

Pat Cox: And it still exists. There's a Facebook page [inaudible 1:02:01] and the other is the YWCA, which has had for 100 years, the twin mission of dismantling racism and empowering women and the groups for white people are called Witnessing Whiteness and they are groups and they are learning about yourself and how to use yourself as an instrument of opening this out.

Malaika Horne: How many women are part of your women's group?

Pat Cox: We have over 400 women on the mailing list and then more come and whatever and men ally...