

An Interview with
Faith Sandler

at *The* Historical Society of Missouri St. Louis
Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri

10 November 2015 & 15 March 2016

interviewed by Dr. Malaika Horne
transcribed by Valerie Leri and edited by
Josephine Sporleder



Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri
Collection S1207 Women as Change Agents DVD 49

NOTICE

1) This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code). It may not be cited without acknowledgment to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, a Joint Collection of the University of Missouri and the State Historical Society of Missouri Manuscripts, Columbia, Missouri. Citations should include: [Name of collection] Project, Collection Number C4020, [name of interviewee], [date of interview], Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

2) Reproductions of this transcript are available for reference use only and cannot be reproduced or published in any form (including digital formats) without written permission from the Western Historical Manuscript Collection.

3) Use of information or quotations from any [Name of collection] Collection transcript indicates agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the University of Missouri, the State Historical Society of Missouri, their officers, employees, and agents, and the interviewee from and against all claims and actions arising out of the use of this material.

For further information, contact: The State Historical Society of Missouri, St. Louis Research Center, 222 Thomas Jefferson Library, One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63121 (314) 516-5119

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.

Malaika Horne: ...it's an interview about women who are change agents and we want to have a conversation about your life, your career and whatever else. So, my first question...I've already introduced myself, my name is Malaika Horne...I know you, for the sake of disclosure. I used to serve on the board of the Scholarship Foundation and I continue to be a volunteer at the Scholar Shop but talk about your youth, anything about your family, what elementary and secondary schools you attended.

Faith Sandler: Sure. So, I was born in New York City and lived in Chicago for a number of years and then started elementary school in St. Louis. My father is an educator. I think once that's in your blood, it does not leave, even when you quit the classroom. And my mother was a part-time administrator in the school where I attended, so from kindergarten through 8th grade. My father was principal and teacher and my mother was administrator in a school that was located at Big Bend and Forsythe called Bethel Lutheran. At the time, it was landmark in the area because it was a school that was deliberately and wonderfully integrated and my parents were instrumental in the development of that school.

Malaika Horne: And where was this?

Faith Sandler: Big Bend and Forsythe? Cattycorner from Wash U.

Malaika Horne: Oh, Big Bend and Forsythe, right.

Faith Sandler: Right. So growing up I was at school long hours because my parents both worked there and I developed a love for education and the process of learning that is still my love. Then I went to public high school in Webster Groves after that and I absolutely hated that.

Malaika Horne: You say "was wonderfully integrated" at Big Bend and Forsythe, that area.

Faith Sandler: Mm-hmm.

Malaika Horne: So talk to me about that. Then you said you didn't like Webster Groves and talk to me about that.

Faith Sandler: So it was wonderfully integrated because I think word had traveled that it was a welcoming community and so there were lots of families who I grew up with. I grew up with Chuck Berry's kids, the Townsend family and a number of St. Louis families...Dr. and Mrs. Frank Richards and their

family. So it was a great place, small classes, lots of experiential learning and because I knew everyone and was there from kindergarten through 8th grade, it felt like a place where I belonged and Webster Groves High School did not. Webster Groves High School was very (lockstep?) and very traditional in its approach to education and very stratified economically and racially and I, therefore, did not care for it and graduated in three years so I could move on.

Malaika Horne: Did you have any leadership responsibilities in either one of those, in the elementary or high school?

Faith Sandler: No. In high school, my leadership responsibilities were all outside of school so I got involved in outdoor education and experiential education and took groups of young people camping and rock climbing and backpacking and canoeing and ropes courses and also urban experiences that were experiential in nature, so camping and traveling through the city and environments that might not have been their immediate or most comfortable environment. So I led those programs and even in college, directed the organization when the executive director was ill. So my leadership was mostly outside the school.

Malaika Horne: Did that shape your leadership style today?

Faith Sandler: It did, it did very much.

Malaika Horne: How so?

Faith Sandler: In that I had reinforced in those experiences the knowledge that the more connected and engaged people are in their learning, the better the outcome and I use that to this day.

Malaika Horne: You should... I love that.

Faith Sandler: When I'm working with boards of directors, with young people who are in our programs, with staff, I take great joy in thinking about how to organize a learning experience that won't look like last month's or last week's or yesterday's.

Malaika Horne: Most creative I've ever experienced.

Faith Sandler: I love that.

Malaika Horne: I do, too.

Faith Sandler: And I love the learning process so for me, I like to put myself with people who also love that.

Malaika Horne: Right and I rip it off every time I...

Faith Sandler: We're all ripping it off.

Malaika Horne: Who encouraged you inside the home...and you mentioned about outside the home?

Faith Sandler: Right. So inside the home, both of my parents encouraged me in very different ways. My father, as an educator, my father is very strong in character and he expected me to be his match in strength so from him I learned how to stay at the dinner table and how to stay in a conversation until a conclusion and I learned how to stand up for myself and I learned how to cut firewood and rotate the tires on the car and do things that might not have otherwise been expected of a girl at the time. So that was fabulous and still is a part of my fiber. And I learned from my mother acceptance and care and commitment. My mother is and was just a strong, caring presence in every relationship she has.

Malaika Horne: Any other leadership influences?

Faith Sandler: There were a number of leadership influences along the way. The college that I went to was an alternative college where everything was negotiable.

Malaika Horne: Where did you go to college/

Faith Sandler: Johnston College at the University of Redlands so it was a college created in 1970. I attended in '79 but everything about it was organized around community: community meetings weekly; governance by community of students and faculty and association; curriculum in kind of an open market process. So I learned a lot about leadership there, including sometimes the group just needs to follow the leader because in an environment like that, everything...

Malaika Horne: What a novel idea.

Faith Sandler: Yeah...everything would be up for negotiation and sometimes the professor really just needs to say, "No, read the text and write the paper.

I'm done negotiating that." But there were a lot of people there who encouraged me and who saw talents in me I didn't know I had.

Malaika Horne: Let's go back to your family. I know you have a sister.

Faith Sandler: I do have a sister.

Malaika Horne: Is that one sibling or do you have others?

Faith Sandler: I have one sister, she's two-and-a-half years younger than me.

Malaika Horne: What does she do?

Faith Sandler: She has her Master's Degree in nursing and she, in addition to raising a family, she operates a small non-profit that provides care for individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's so that their caregivers have respite.

Malaika Horne: Is she here?

Faith Sandler: She's in Florida.

Malaika Horne: Okay, now this is a question that all the interviewers ask and it's a little awkward but 50 years earlier, what do you think you would have been doing?

Faith Sandler: If I had been born 50 years earlier?

Malaika Horne: Yeah.

Faith Sandler: So if I had been born 50 years earlier, it would have been 1910, which is interesting because my grandmother was born in 1909, so I'm going to answer it from what I know about what she was doing which is that...and she was one of my role models too...she was a librarian and a reader but she never got a chance to go to college. She went to what was then Harris Teachers' College and was on the tennis team and really was a great tennis player and had to leave school to be married and really never had a chance to do what she might have, in her dreams, thought she would be doing. She married and raised three sons. So I suppose I'd have probably ended up like my grandmother, which is smart and frustrated.

Malaika Horne: I completely understand. Your career...and you may have touched upon it already...were there any other people who influenced your career?

Faith Sandler: A professor in college who is Japanese and an anthropologist and who helped me appreciate the discipline of cultural observation and participant observation and ethnography and the idea that it can be a place of privilege to be an outsider. He had ample experience with that. He grew up Christian in Tokyo and that was an outsider status, and then Japanese in the United States and I learned so much from his example and then that helped shape my career as well.

Malaika Horne: That's very profound and I agree an outsider view. Anything else about your life and career that you would like to share, because I know you do so much and I know you're very involved with supporting low and moderate income students to go to college.

Faith Sandler: Right, Well, one of the things that I remember and I talk about which sounds crazy to some people is that I grew up low income, like many of the students that I work with now, but unlike many of the students that I work with, I never knew we were low income. I mean, it was not a position of disadvantage. So I didn't know until I started applying to colleges and realized how much financial aid I qualified for, that we were poor because we were only poor economically. My parents both went to school. I was provided lots of support for what I wanted to do and lots of opportunity to learn and to travel and to go to museums and to read and to think and to engage. So I didn't have a package of disadvantage; I had economic disadvantage and so that inspires my work even more because I know something about what the economic limitation can be and I'm furious about the rest of the limitations that I see our students faced.

Malaika Horne: What would be some examples of the rest of the limitations?

Faith Sandler: Race, immigration status, lack of access to resources. Being the first in the family, to pursue education, I was not, so many of the tools that I needed were around me all the time. So those are probably the primary ones.

Malaika Horne: What were some of your leadership lessons? What did you learn along the way, that you maybe had to shift or revise or anything?

Faith Sandler: One of the things that has stood me in good stead...back to those outdoor education experiences...is that almost always the group is smarter than the individual so that has been helpful in leadership, in understanding that if I work well with a board or a group of students, the

outcome will be stronger than anything I might go in a corner and do by myself. That is a lesson I've learned over and over again, is to trust the wisdom of a group of people working together, if given the right opportunity. I am learning now...so I'm 54 and I'm only now beginning to learn that my leadership role can and has shifted from blazing a trail to helping get out of the way for the next generation of trail-blazers and supporting and encouraging and mentoring and listening. For me that's been really the last two or three years. It's a transition in how I want to work and how I think, fascinating.

Malaika Horne: And in my college experience, I remember Nelson Mandela, they described him as leading from behind...

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: ...and people think that's not effective or not the best way to lead.

Faith Sandler: Yeah. I am learning that and loving that opportunity. So that's something new for me and it's an educational process. It's a process of patience; it's a process of tolerance of error, and it's a beautiful process for me, to see leadership development, to see opportunity actually grow in an individual.

Malaika Horne: To see yourself evolve?

Faith Sandler: Yeah, and to see somebody else get a chance, get the chances that I got now that I know more about what they were.

Malaika Horne: Do you think that the leadership style of most men is different from the leadership style of most women?

Faith Sandler: I do.

Malaika Horne: How so?

Faith Sandler: So, I'm going to be a little bit anachronistic here but when we first brought men on the board of this...first of all, the Scholarship Foundation board was all women from 1920 until, like, 1990. A year or two after I got there, men were introduced to the board of directors and one of the things I learned initially in a lot of the group dynamics that involved men was the behavior...I'm just going to call it like I called it in my head, which is peeing on trees. It's sort of that behavior that dogs do, where they

want everybody who comes after, in the room or everybody in the premises and everybody later to know that they've been there and it's an individual act of marking their importance and that has not been my experience of how women usually work. Women in groups also work collaboratively. They're often as likely to give credit to someone else as to need it themselves and that is not because they don't see their accomplishments; that's because they're thinking collectively and working collectively and many men I've worked with do not come by that naturally. I've come to believe that they can learn it but I've come to believe that it's not the way many men get to where they are in the world.

Malaika Horne: And it's in the literature.

Faith Sandler: I'm sure it is in the literature. Maybe not with that phrase.

Malaika Horne: Well, they do talk about the collaborative tendency of women and men, how they want to...

Faith Sandler: Right, right.

Malaika Horne: Down the torpedoes, full speed ahead.

Faith Sandler: Right. So sometimes in my current job, I've had male board members or presidents who want to know what my agenda is, "What is your agenda for the organization?" "What's your direction; what's your goals?" and that's not the way I work. What are our goals? You're on the board; you're a part of this process. I'm not setting forth an agenda that you'll decide whether or not to support or torpedo. It will be ours collectively and that's not always efficient but it's always, in my view, more effective.

Malaika Horne: Did anything impede your progress?

Faith Sandler: That's a hard one for me because I don't think of things that way.

Malaika Horne: And your image is not that.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: You appear as such a high achiever, very accomplished and people probably wouldn't even imagine that anything has gotten in your way.

- Faith Sandler: I think the things that have gotten in my way might be...they're things I cherish though so that's why I'm having a difficulty. It has gotten in my way that I tell the truth. It has gotten in my way that I will be candid about a body of research or a bit of data or a policy or a practice that I know is inaccurate or discriminatory or a mis-characterization or an injustice and I'll say so and that gets in my way sometimes, kind of the emperor has no clothes syndrome where everyone else around me has somehow a tacit agreement to pretend like it's all okay. That's gotten in my way but I wouldn't trade it; I wouldn't. I mean, I can see it happening. I know when it's happening and I make a deliberate decision.
- Malaika Horne: And you deal with the consequences?
- Faith Sandler: Yes. So that doesn't feel like it's gotten in my way, and honestly, Malaika, even in my personal life, I've had some family issues or issues of mental health in my family that I would like to say I might characterize those as impediments or have gotten in my way but I've learned from them and I've learned a lot from them so I don't view anything as having gotten in my way...sorry.
- Malaika Horne: Well, that's the way you come across too. Any awards or recognitions?
- Faith Sandler: Yes.
- Malaika Horne: I know you have a lot but just an example of some.
- Faith Sandler: Well, I got an alumni award from my high school which is ironic because I just earlier told you that it was not my favorite place in the world but I got an award from them. I got an award from Money Magazine for being the Missouri money hero and for a lot of people that was a really big deal. I've gotten awards from the Clayton Chamber of Commerce or the NAACP or the National College Access Network for my work.
- Malaika Horne: What do you usually read?
- Faith Sandler: I read non-fiction. I love history and biography. I'm a terrible fiction reader.
- Malaika Horne: Me, too.
- Faith Sandler: We probably have a few things in common. I read current news in journalism. I read a lot of work-related literature in my spare time. I have

the beautiful privilege of loving my work so sometimes the lines get very blurred and I don't know whether it's work time or my time.

Malaika Horne: Well, if you enjoy your work, you'll never work a day in your life or something.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: I was speaking to someone recently about it. It's so unusual for people to enjoy what they do.

Faith Sandler: I love what I do.

Malaika Horne: To love what you do, you're very fortunate.

Faith Sandler: I love what I do and I am comfortable. When I had a family, I had to draw some boundaries. Now that my family doesn't need me to be home at a particular hour or put dinner on the table, literally, I don't observe those boundaries.

Malaika Horne: So what is it about your work that you love?

Faith Sandler: I believe my work is full of hope and the potential for change. I believe that, on an individual level, I and my work are sometimes the catalyst for individuals to go from a place of need to the capacity to contribute but I believe that my work...the other thing that I love about my work is that I really profoundly believe it's about the connection between policy, systems and people and I get to be in all of those places every day.

Malaika Horne: It's very dynamic.

Faith Sandler: It's very dynamic and I never feel like I'm not...honestly, every day I feel like I've accomplished something.

Malaika Horne: The title of this project is "Women as Change Agents." What do you think that means, a "change agent"?

Faith Sandler: I think it means some amount of entrepreneurial spirit, willing to take a risk or willing to try something that is not proven. I think a change agent is a truth-teller in many cases, asks the question nobody wants to ask. In this section portion of my career, the more mentoring portion of my career, I think I operate as a change agent often by saying to women who come behind me, "You're not an imposter. You got here for real. You can

do it. You can do it. You're in this place because this is where you need to be." I work with a lot of young women who kind of wonder, like, "How is it that I got here? I don't deserve this" or "I'm not ready."

Malaika Horne: Do you know the reason for this feeling that...you say young women...

Faith Sandler: Youth, color, feeling like their educational experience was insufficient or didn't equip them, their formal education experience. Smart people didn't always get the best formal education, K-12 or college.

Malaika Horne: So when you say "youth," and I want to go to color but is it naiveté when you talk about youth or what's the reason for these young women thinking...

Faith Sandler: I think, in part, I'm working with a lot of people who didn't have people in their corner saying, "You're worth it; you're worth it. You're here for a reason. You belong. You're worth it; go, go, go; you've got it."

Malaika Horne: So confidence?

Faith Sandler: Right, right. I spend a lot of my time doing that now.

Malaika Horne: And "color"?

Faith Sandler: And color.

Malaika Horne: The same reasons, confidence?

Faith Sandler: Confidence and candor, the ability to have open discussions about things that may happen in the course of a normal work day that are, if not offensive, borderline or uncomfortable for a young person of color in a new professional field but not knowing how to challenge it or how to talk about it or whether anybody saw it, felt it, understood why it might be damaging or insulting.

Malaika Horne: Raising awareness, it sounds like.

Faith Sandler: Yeah.

Malaika Horne: So we're winding down. Any hobbies? I know your day is full. Any hobbies?

Faith Sandler: I love yoga, outdoors in the park at Grand Basin in Forest Park; riding a bike; playing with my cat or my dog. That's probably it on the hobbies.

I'm not a collector. I love museums and obscure collections like all of the collections here and that's probably it.

Malaika Horne: Is there anything we missed?

Faith Sandler: Well, I guess the one thing we might have missed and we might get dialogue here instead of monologue is that I don't always feel...I have rarely felt that my gender was a detriment and so sometimes I'm in an environment where a subject like "women as change agents" or "women as leaders" is viewed as groundbreaking and I've never felt that my gender really kept me from doing what I wanted to do, and maybe that's the era in which I grew up. Maybe that's just the unique circumstances but often in my work right now, it's actually in higher education, it's men who are the endangered species in degree, in enrollment and degree completion, not only at the baccalaureate but at the graduate level and even in some of the professional schools that used to be over populated by men: medicine; law. So, I don't always fit in an environment in which women's issues are the primary focus.

Malaika Horne: Well, Helen Fisher wrote this book, "The Natural Talents of Women," and she talks about women in social service having many more opportunities to lead than women, for example, in business...

Faith Sandler: True.

Malaika Horne: ...because of the sector that you work in might be...

Faith Sandler: Absolutely yes, so both the non-profit sector and the education sector have more women in positions of leadership and responsibility certainly than the corporate sector or engineering, for instance, or other fields, yes. That is a factor.

Malaika Horne: I know I got my leadership experience from working in social service. It really helped me get moved into higher education...

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: ...because the faculty and administrators are primarily, especially the professors, full professors, full-time, are still majority male.

Faith Sandler: Right. I guess I appreciated and borrowed a lot from, like, James Collins and "The Good to Great," literature, especially the Good to Great

literature that identified the things that for-profit industry could learn from the non-profit industry from the way we lead, from the way we set strategic goals and priorities, from the way we manage, separate from leadership. So for me, that body of literature just reinforced what I felt like I was experiencing, which was I had real authority, I had real leadership, I had real responsibility and it matters beyond my own paycheck or my family's well-being that I do the work that I do. It matters to the world.

Malaika Horne: (Audio glitch) This is a big issue nowadays with women in particular and between work, home and family, how do you manage work/life balance?

Faith Sandler: I think my approach to work/life balance has changed primarily because my home has changed. I no longer have children in the home and that gives me more of a chance to blur the lines between work and home. I love what I do. I appreciate being able to think about my work and some of the issues involved in it off-site, on my spare time, when I'm walking in the park or sitting in the living room. So it's less important for me to try to balance that.

Malaika Horne: When you did have children and were younger, how did you manage?

Faith Sandler: I had to be more specific about when I would leave the office. I had to multi-task all the time, couldn't go anywhere without doing five things on the way to and from that place, far less thinking time, reflection time, much more doing all the time.

Malaika Horne: Do you think that should be considered with women, as opposed to men having less of that? I guess they're incurring more of it but still, the lion's share of child rearing, housework, those kinds of things are still on women but yet, it seems like we're being evaluated similarly. So your thoughts?

Faith Sandler: I used to wish that there weren't a difference between men and women or especially boys and girls in the way we approach relationships but I think one of the things that makes life a greater challenge for working and professional women is that we're not relieved of any responsibility outside of work either. So I've been thinking about this lately because it's very hard for me to turn off the caretaker role. It's very hard for me to turn off the facilitator, responsible to other people's needs role.

Malaika Horne: Even at work or at home?

Faith Sandler: At home especially but at work as well. I don't shut it down at the end of the day or I don't shut down home when I go to work and I don't shut down work when I go home. I feel constantly responsible to all of it and sometimes that's burdensome and sometimes I look around at men in my life and I don't see that same constant presence and constant concern for others. So I'm not very good at putting myself first and I've been noticing that more lately.

Malaika Horne: All of that is in the literature.

Faith Sandler: Mm-hmm.

Malaika Horne: Last time we talked about maybe some of your impediments but I wanted to go a little bit further: any big failures and what did you learn from the experiences?

Faith Sandler: So, I, apropos of what we were just discussing, I think one...I don't know if I call it a failure...one shortcoming for me is that I was raised to think if I just worked hard enough I could do anything, including change the world and, while that's a motivating, driving force, I think for me it's also created a shortcoming which is that I feel like I could/should be able to control, be responsible for everything around me all the time. So it is hard for me to decide to surrender that, I'm actually not in charge of the things that I sometimes fight against or attempt to control and that's a shortcoming. It creates an anxiety or a feeling of "if only I did a little bit more...if only I'd tried a little harder...if only I kept at it" and so that gets in my way sometimes. It gets in the way of peace; it gets in the way of contentment sometimes.

Malaika Horne: This is uncanny, the way you think...and I'm including myself in this too...then people begin to think you're super woman.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: Then they expect more from you.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: So, again, since you've learned that this is one of your shortcomings, what are you doing about it?

- Faith Sandler: Sometimes I'm doing really small little steps. I realized maybe a year or two ago that I never say "I don't know." I didn't use to, more now in response to a probing question or a question that is an expectation, "What are you going to do about this?" or "How are you going to solve that?" or "What's the plan for this?" I'm getting better at just saying, "I don't know," and there's two parts to that. One is me being comfortable saying it and the other part is me being comfortable with the discomfort on the other side of that transaction where an individual or an organization has become accustomed to me having the answers and I have to let it be okay that I don't.
- Malaika Horne: So there's this pregnant pause.
- Faith Sandler: Right.
- Malaika Horne: And you wait for them...
- Faith Sandler: Right, because people aren't used to it. They don't know what to do. I've always been able to, in their minds at least, been able to muster and come up with an answer and package it the way that it will work for everyone involved and I'm getting better at saying, "I don't know," and I guess the other thing I'm learning is active listening.
- Malaika Horne: How do you define that?
- Faith Sandler: I define that as, honestly, self-discipline when an individual is expressing to me or in my presence of not trying to think of how I'm going to respond or what I'm going to say, but actually just listening for understanding.
- Malaika Horne: That's good.
- Faith Sandler: It's hard. I didn't realize how much I have processed thinking of how I'm going to, again, control or direct and I'm trying to learn to not just listen but let things sit instead of trying to shape them quite as immediately.
- Malaika Horne: Well, you're a head of a very successful enterprise and you've been leading it for a long time and it just grows and grows and grows. So I can see how that could have some diminishing terms so to speak. But let me go in the other direction: Are there any big opportunities on the horizon?

Faith Sandler: I think there are big opportunities on the horizon and I think that they carry some risk. There's an increasing call for me and the organization to be engaged in advocacy and policy matters in public issues. I love that kind of work. There's some risk involved in that the organization has occupied a pretty safe place for a while and for some, it's more comfortable to think of our work in terms of kind of individual acts of charity or kindness than attempts to change systems or to affect imbedded racism, sexism, elitism, classism that is present, not only in our organization but in the context in which we work. So, for me, the big opportunity is we're right on the edge of being asked to do that kind of work, not just locally but nationally. I feel very invested in that work but not certain the organization has the stomach for it.

Malaika Horne: So, how do you address that? How do you influence that or do you even intend to? It sounds like a big picture approach.

Faith Sandler: Mm-hmm. I continually try to create opportunities for other people to be in the middle of those debates and recognize that is where the growth opportunity is for the organization that is how we will achieve our mission. So, to the extent that I can invite others into that discussion, it might help increase the comfort or maybe better, I should say, decrease the discomfort. So that's one way. Another way is to constructively engage young people. The next generation of leaders for the organization, the long-term succession planning for the organization doesn't rely upon me or present board members to take the reins. It relies upon the next generation, so inviting and creating ways that those individuals, our students, our recent graduates are actually much more close to the policy-making part of our work, or leading the policy-making part of our work, can kind of quell the debate. Pretty hard to say, "No, that's not relevant " to a person, who's saying, "Not only is it relevant but I'm affected. I've been involved. You have participating in at the education of me and the empowerment of me and I'm here to say this matters."

Malaika Horne: Do you think the environment that we're in right now with "Black Lives Matter" and all the other issues, political campaign, U.S. presidency and all the debates, do you think that that, in addition to young people because I agree, might help as well?

Faith Sandler: Honestly, right now, I think that is hurting, not helping.

Malaika Horne: Why?

Faith Sandler: Because I think people have developed a knee-jerk response to the expression of dissatisfaction with a knee-jerk response to the art of protest or the expression of strong opinion, strong feeling and sometimes the work that we're doing looks like protest. It is protest; it shouldn't be scary because it's basic democratic engagement, small "d," not a big "D." But I've encountered, we've encountered some real stereotyping and real opposition to tactic as much as content and sometimes that's judged simply on the basis of the age, color, attire, outward characteristics of the individuals carrying the message.

Malaika Horne: And you mentioned about the next generation and my next question, which might also help mitigate some of these factors: What do you look for in others when it comes to leadership potential?

Faith Sandler: When I'm looking to others for leadership, I'm looking for a thirst to learn, the desire to develop as an individual, and the recognition that we're never all the way there, so that hunger or thirst for learning, passion about the subject. So again, with the next generation, for me, the expression of engagement, especially on the issues we're working on, to me that's hope; that's the possibility that we're going to be okay as a community and as a country. I don't see it as threatening; I see it as thank goodness, thank goodness these young people who I'm working with are awake and willing and want to get in there and connect with an imperfect process and make their viewpoint known and make the process better.

Malaika Horne: So the glass is half full?

Faith Sandler: Absolutely.

Malaika Horne: You're an optimist?

Faith Sandler: Absolutely.

Malaika Horne: And you have to be. What is the best advice to others who are trying to make a difference, especially the younger people who are really coming into their own, what advice would you give them?

Faith Sandler: Some of it is going to sound school marmish: to do their homework. Don't start discussing an issue you haven't done your homework on. Know who else is doing work in that area. Read the literature....I mean,

goofy...read the newspaper, know more than your opinion, be able to express yourself in some acceptable language of the day, so to be able to write, be able to write persuasively, clearly, succinctly, and then don't back down, but almost in that order, you know? Sometimes the young people I work with start with the "I'm not backing down but I don't know why and I don't know how to tell you or explain it to you..."...not "you" individually but "you," world. So I would invert the order of those things and that would be my advice.

Malaika Horne: Okay. And who is your hero or heroine or mentor, however you want to put it?

Faith Sandler: My father is my hero in that he is and always has been a life-long learner and a life-long educator, both, and I think they go hand-in-hand, being a teacher and a learner. He's an unsettled, restless kind of person and that part I'm learning not to idolize quite as much as I might have earlier in life. I had a hero mentor, she's no longer living, by the name of Maggie Dagan and she had a great influence on me in that she was a very disciplined, very organized, very thoughtful and very committed to issues of social justice in a substantive way and once she got a hold of you, she didn't let go.

Malaika Horne: I saw you one evening at the St. Louis Public Radio dinner...

Faith Sandler: Uh-huh.

Malaika Horne: I remember.... She wasn't letting go.

Faith Sandler: Right, right, and that relationship ended with her not letting go. I was there to the very end and in her last weeks; she wouldn't eat any food unless I had prepared it. So the tables had kind of turned in the relationship. She made sure to leave a lot of things with me that would help me remember her, so little pieces of art or a piece of writing or something I will come upon in my office or my home that reminds me, kind of like a mooring or an anchor.

Malaika Horne: Was she associated with some organization?

Faith Sandler: She was with the Scholarship Foundation.

Malaika Horne: Oh, did she help to star it or...

Faith Sandler: Before I got there, she was really the unpaid educational consultant to the board. She was instrumental in integrating the board, both from a religious standpoint, so as I think you know, the organization's history was in the Jewish community and in the early '60s, separated formally from the Jewish community...still lots of unofficial connection, and Maggie was also the person that pushed the racial integration of the board and of the student population at the Scholarship Foundation. So she was there when I got there. I was the first executive director. She, thankfully, was not involved in hiring me but once she met me, decided maybe that was an okay decision and maybe she could take me under her wing and help me be successful in that role, help the organization continue to be successful.

Malaika Horne: So, for historical purposes, the Scholarship Foundation started in 1920...

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: ...and then the Scholar Shop in 19...

Faith Sandler: ...'60.

Malaika Horne: And when did you start?

Faith Sandler: I started in 1989.

Malaika Horne: That's good to have those markers.

Faith Sandler: And so, 2020 will be the 100th anniversary of the organization, also the 100th anniversary of women suffrage.

Malaika Horne: That's right.

Faith Sandler: So I love it that the organization began the same year...

Malaika Horne: It sure did.

Faith Sandler: ...that women got to vote.

Malaika Horne: I'm sure you all have, or we have big plans.

Faith Sandler: Yeah, we do, we do and we'll develop more.

Malaika Horne: So, as executive director of the Scholarship Foundation, what is the future of low and moderate income students when it comes to being able to finance their college education?

Faith Sandler: That's a good question. I wish I knew the answer. The future is not to continue on the path that we're on. The future is that those students represent an increasing proportion of all students. They represent an increasing presence on campuses like this one and others in urban areas. They are going to be the future, those students and hopefully graduates, in the United States and we are ill-prepared right now to finance or support those students to completion and success. So, funding needs to change; priorities about funding need to change; K-12 education needs to change so that our students are better prepared, but also post-secondary education needs to quit bellyaching about K-12 and get better about assessing the learning needs of incoming students and being able to meet those needs. I do not believe that even those inadequately educated K-12 can't be educationally reclaimed and successful at the post-secondary level but I don't think we know how to do it yet. So I think it's a two-way thing. We need to know how to do it until we get K-12 stronger and it's not an either/or.

Malaika Horne: And I just wanted to add one of the things that I say in my work here, is that many of the working class students didn't come from professional families so they don't have those professional networks within their family so we have to spend more time socializing them or culturing to the expectations of the professional world.

Faith Sandler: Absolutely.

Malaika Horne: And that's kind of missing in most of their experiences. So that's one of the things I do, is expose them to a senior level professional so they'll be more prepared.

Faith Sandler: Sure.

Malaika Horne: And that's another big part that we're missing.

Faith Sandler: I agree completely and I think that, both at the university level and in the workplace, for some reason, we tend to expect students to show up with that already in place, and I don't feel like we know well what to do when they don't have it in place. So thankfully there are programs like yours.

Thankfully there are some programs like the internships that we offer at the Scholarship Foundation or some of the relationships we have with young people where...I don't even know how to say this so it doesn't sound this simplistic...it's not rocket science to slow down enough to sit down and say, "Here's what I expect. When I ask you to write a draft, I want you to give it to me after you've gotten it as far as you can get it. I don't want your first draft because you're not giving me your best work. I'm going to give this back to you. I'm going to ask you to come back to me with your best work." That doesn't have to be disrespectful. It can just be direct or "I appreciate that you got to work on time today but that is not an appropriate pair of pants to wear to work. It diminishes how other people will view you when you walk in the room and I think you deserve better. So tomorrow, here's what I want you to think about when you're getting dressed."

Malaika Horne: And they respond very well to that.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: They do. They respond very well to me, too.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: Because they want to know.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: They want to be successful.

Faith Sandler: Right.

Malaika Horne: Now, the National College Network...is that what it's called?

Faith Sandler: National College Access Network.

Malaika Horne: I wanted to ask you about that. How is that related to the Scholarship Foundation?

Faith Sandler: So the National College Access Network is a network of non-profits and higher education entities that are working to serve low income and first generation students nationally. The Scholarship Foundation was a part of that network very early in its development and we still are pretty actively engaged in that network; like, before coming here today, I was helping

that network get to St. Louis area students who will be addressing 100 college and university leaders in Washington, D.C. next week about the importance of the Pell Grant which is a federal grant but, thankfully, they're looking for students who not only have received the grant, but can speak about its importance and the policy under guarding it and so one of the students who will be speaking is a graduate of this institution and another is one of our students who's at Howard. That came to us through the National College Access Network. We work with them on advocacy at the federal level. They take the work that we do at the regional level and hold it up as an example nationally. So it's a great partnership.

Malaika Horne: Okay. And then, lastly, in an earlier part of the interview, in November, you talked about taking a back seat in regard to leadership rather than blazing the trail that you did early and doing more mentoring and doing more listening. What have you learned from this phase of leadership?

Faith Sandler: I think I have learned from this phase of leadership that it is a stage of leadership development. I don't think I could have done it 30 years ago, 20 years ago. I think I have satisfied a lot of my own ego needs actually. I've accomplished a lot of what I want to accomplish and so I no longer feel the competitive edge that maybe I once did so I've learned something about accompanying someone else on a journey rather than being the trail-blazer. I have learned how to think about and see potential before individuals see it in themselves and that's a joyful thing for me. That's like a legacy for me. If I can keep doing that, then I'm going to feel like I've accomplished something on this earth.

Malaika Horne: And if I may say this, there is much more of your leadership to come. I don't know if you remember me visualizing you being like Marian Edelman, a national spokesperson. I mean, you could certainly do it if you wanted to and it's up to you. We definitely need it in this country.

Faith Sandler: Well, thank you.

Malaika Horne: We appreciate all your hard work.

Faith Sandler: Well, thank you. One of the things that I run up against sometimes is that I'm fairly frank and honest. Sometimes that puts me in a constant critic or critique role. I'm comfortable with that but I don't know if it lends itself quite as easily to a national stage and that's okay. I don't know another

way to do what I do so...but I've encountered that a little bit lately, "Look out for Faith; she's going to tell the truth."

Malaika Horne: Isn't that strange, "She's going to tell the truth!"

Faith Sandler: Yeah.

Malaika Horne: That's what we need to really solve problems.

Faith Sandler: Mm-hmm.

Malaika Horne: So anything else before we end?

Faith Sandler: No, I don't think so. I really appreciate the opportunity and thank you for inviting me back and it's especially meaningful to me and comfortable to me that you're the person sitting here.

Malaika Horne: Well, I loved the first part, that when I looked at it today, I'm like; this is a great addition so thank you so much.

Faith Sandler: Yeah, thank you, Malaika.