

Project: Bay Area Feminists Oral History Project

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[Interview # 1: June 26, 2006, San Jose, California]

[Linda LeZotte.wav]

**Moon:**

My name is Danelle Moon, I'm the Director of San Jose State's University Special Collections and Archives, and today I am interviewing Linda LeZotte, who is currently on the Santa Clara County Board Supervisor for District 4, and we are meeting in her office in San Jose. Today's date is June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The sound picks up pretty well.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, good.

**Moon:**

Except that if you're, you know, like with Susie Wilson she has a really light voice.

**LeZotte:**

She does, doesn't she?

**Moon:**

She does, and so I had trouble with the sound on some of her interviews, but anyway, I hope that you won't [get?] that trouble.

**LeZotte:**

I'll try to speak up.

**Moon:**

Yeah. OK, well, as I said, you know, the purpose of this project is really to document South Bay women for this larger research project that I'm working on, and that I hope to get published at some point. And I'll be presenting a paper on this topic in Minnesota in November, and so I'm really anxious to, you know, capture as many, you know, women's experiences as possible. And you've had a really interesting -- I was looking at some of the biographical information that we've been able to cull through the newspapers and whatnot and through your website, and so I want to start kind of from just kind of a -- briefly from your early kind of work and kind of your transition after you received your Bachelor's Degree. I was really interested in the fact that you passed the California Bar, but it doesn't appear that you actually got your JD or --

**LeZotte:**

Oh, yes, I did.

**Moon:**

You did? OK, that's missing in my research. And so where did you get your law degree from?

**LeZotte:**

Lincoln University in San Francisco.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK. Wow, that was missing from the record and then it said you were admitted -- it said you -- we found that you had worked as a paralegal and then it jumped from paralegal to admission to the Bar so I thought, "Hmm, I wonder where the law degree fit in there" (laughter). OK.

**LeZotte:**

And then I got my Master's in Tax Law.

**Moon:**

Right. And so that's where I was a little confused about your earlier kind of, you know, education.

**LeZotte:**

I practiced law for 17 years.

**Moon:**

That's what I thought, and I didn't think you could practice law in California without a law degree.

**LeZotte:**

No, no. Yeah, I (inaudible).

**Moon:**

Yeah, that's what I was trying to think, because there's some places, you know, where you can actually practice law even if you passed the Bar. In some states I think you can actually do that, and I didn't think California was one of those states. I studied paralegal --

**LeZotte:**

Oh.

**Moon:**

Studied when I first -- before I went into history, but I decided that lawyering was just not for me. But OK, so you actually did get your law degree. I just want to make sure I correct that.

**LeZotte:**

1980.

**Moon:**

1980, OK.

**LeZotte:**

In San Francisco.

**Moon:**

All right, well, let's start with, you know, kind of just generally talking about how do -- do you define yourself as a feminist, and how would you define feminism, in looking at your current work?

**LeZotte:**

Well, I most definitely describe myself as a feminist. I think, you know, from the early involvement in politics, or in anything, it was always looking at positioning women and positioning myself and sort of -- I haven't had overt discrimination, it's been more covert, and so it's always been about, you know, doing good work and being better than anybody so there was never any -- like that kind of way of dealing with covert discrimination. But, you know, I truly believe that, particularly women who become involved in whatever, politics, or activists, that they bring a different lens and they bring a different way of looking at the world that I think needs to be there. I mean, it's -- I'm sure you'll ask me at some point, you know, who some of my early mentors were, and I have, you know, a man in particular and a woman in particular, but. And I'll mention the woman because she's a current legislator, and it's just someone that I have always looked at her career and what it has meant to California to have her in office, and that's Jackie Spears. I was working in a law firm when Jackie returned from Jonestown. And so I've known her a very long time, and was involved in her early forays into politics. And I've always followed her even though I was living in San Mateo at the time I moved -- first to San Francisco and then I moved back down to San Jose. I've always kind of followed her political career and watched the legislation that she's enacted, and it's always been thoughtful and looking at women and children, and the underserved, and looking out for people's well-beings. And you know, the women and children legislation and things like that, but I looked at her consumer legislation as protecting, you know, women for their newfound credit ratings and things and how over, you know, years and years and years of us trying to establish our own credit rating, you know, without having to have a husband and things like that. And so I look at her -- consumer protection is protecting, you know, vulnerable populations and just -- you know, I don't know that that would have happened but for Jackie. She just has a different lens of how to look out for people, and so, you know, a lot of her legislation about women and children and a lot of, you know, Barbara McCulsky, and a lot of early -- you know, I remember when Zoe (sp?) was running for office and she wanted to put, you know, that she was a mother as her designation, and the big hoo-hah about that. So, you know, I think it's a matter of women acknowledging who they are and what they bring to the table, and acknowledging, you know, the societal pressures that sometimes stand in our way when we're having children or not having children. You know, a family can have a child and it doesn't affect, you know, the man's career, but it affects the woman's career.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

And in fact, I was working in the law firm and one of the other women in the office announced that she was pregnant. And the reaction of the partner that I was working for was, "Did you hear so and so is pregnant? Is that something you're going to do?" or, "Do you take your job seriously?"

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

And that was his reaction. Are you on the --

**Moon:**

When was that?

**LeZotte:**

That was in the -- it was before I went up to go to law school, so it was in the late '90s -- late '70s.

**Moon:**

You mean late '70s.

**LeZotte:**

Late '70s. No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I was a practicing attorney. I was an attorney at that point, so it was in the mid-'80s.

**Moon:**

Mid-'80s, OK.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, after I'd gotten my Master's Degree I moved back down from San Francisco. So it was in the mid to late '80s, and I worked in that firm. And, you know, and this is a man who had two children. He couldn't -- I mean adopted two children, both women. His wife was a very accomplished newsperson, radio person, he adopted two girls, and that was his reaction to someone in the office becoming pregnant was, "Are you on the baby track or do you take your job seriously?" And you know, it was those kinds of things and I said, "First of all, you can't ask me that question." You know.

**Moon:**

Right (laughter).

**LeZotte:**

And -- "And it's none of your business." But so as far as my feminism, that was my reaction to him and that I think was being a feminist. Number one, you can't ask me that question, number two, it's none of your business. So, you know, as opposed to you know, another woman in the office who was, you know, regularly -- what's the word? Verbally abused. She was verbally

abused at home and she came into the office and she was verbally abused all day long by another attorney.

**Moon:**

Yeah?

**LeZotte:**

And he tried to do it to me and I said, "Don't ever yell at me." You know, "I'm leaving your office now, when you calm down I'll talk to you, but don't ever yell at me." And he never did. So I mean, so there's ways of being a feminist and being forceful and standing your ground, and it's unfortunate that people will test people.

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

I remember the first time I was Chair of the Planning Commission, and I was the first woman to chair. And we had a couple of people that used to come regularly to just, you know, whatever, people who'd come to planning commission meetings and come to council meetings. And this fellow decided to take me on. I told him his two minutes were up and he kept talking, I said, "Your two minutes is up," and he just kept talking right over me. He'd never ever done that to a man.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

So, you know, I just finally told him, you know, they have to shut off the microphone. So it's a matter of knowing who you are and being willing to stand your ground. You know, and helping other women. My record, you know, and it's kind of disconcerting to see women who say that they're feminists, but every time there's the ability to support a woman, they support the man. I almost, almost always, you know, I'm not going to say 100%, but almost always if there are two equal candidates, I will support the woman.

**Moon:**

Yeah, I will -- yeah, I --

**LeZotte:**

Absolutely, without fail.

**Moon:**

Yeah. Well, a lot of women don't like to even call themselves feminists though everything they do is very feminist-oriented. You know, like in some of the conversations with the other women that have, you know, been in politics preceding your work, there are only two peoples who really called themselves feminists so far, and that is Diane McKenna and Susie Wilson.

**LeZotte:**

Susie Wilson.

**Moon:**

But Janet never really -- I don't think she was really -- she used the term "feminist capitalist" kind of a marketing tool for her political work, but from what I've seen, I wouldn't call her -- first of all, I wouldn't call her a champion of feminism, and I'm not sure that she was a great mentor for a lot of women either, and that's just kind of my own perspective of looking at some of the work that she's done.

**LeZotte:**

Well, and that's one of the things that I try to do. My staff is predominantly women, I hire -- I bring in women interns, and I try to give -- to expose women to politics or to law. I go to speak to a lot of women's groups. I'm a big supporter of Girls for Change, I'm a big supporter of the Y, big supporter of, you know, Emerge. A lot of women -- you know, the Women Lawyers Committee I was president of. So I find an opportunity not only to serve as a leader, but also as a role model and as a mentor. And I think that's very, very important because one of the first jobs I had -- no, it doesn't matter. It gets very hot in this room, and when we shut this door, and I don't know why. Close the door, open these windows, but (inaudible). Or it could be a hot flash. What was I talking about? One of the things that I try to do is make sure that I put myself in a position of being an example. And so if I'm ever, ever asked, I will almost practically drop anything, you know, but a council meeting to go and speak because I think that's very important. I think, you know, much like individuals of varying -- different ethnicities need to be role models. You know, Madison is being implored and engaged to be a role model for the Vietnamese community, but also for Vietnamese women --

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

Because there's a dichotomy, you know, since she's there within that culture. But I always try to get out and try to be a role model and go into particularly underprivileged areas to show that, you know, my family wasn't wealthy. You know, I worked my way through undergraduate school and law school. You know? Didn't get a scholarship, took out student loans, and you know, you just have to set your mark and go for it. You know? And I know that I, you know, I don't -- didn't have some of the other issues that some other families did, but I didn't come from a wealthy family. If I was going to college, I had to get there on my own and pay for it on my own. So, you know, so I try to impart that to young women.

**Moon:**

Right. Well, you also -- sounds like you came from really strong sort of values also, that kind of gave you self-confidence. What would -- would you say that your mother or your other family members were influential in help developing your confidence that way?

**LeZotte:**

I think my mom was pretty independent, but you know, my parents came from the, you know, culture. My mother had five kids, her sister had seven, eight, and you know, I don't want to -- you know, I think it was probably more male-dominated, and I actually think that my feminism was a result of that.

**Moon:**

Yeah. Mine was too (laughter).

**LeZotte:**

As opposed to -- you know, I think all of the women in my family, my mother's -- my mother and her sisters were all, you know, pretty independent. And you know, and stood their ground, but nevertheless, that era was male-dominated. And so that -- I've always seen injustice in people having power because they're either wealthy or they're the in-group. And that has always, always been a challenge for me and to me. And I, you know, I mean I rail against authority, I just always have.

**Moon:**

OK.

**LeZotte:**

I mean, as -- when I was in -- I don't like favoritism just because you're someone's pet.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

And that will get me going, and usually, you know, what would get me going is a woman, you know, if I saw that in an office situation or anywhere else. But even among women, women can be very, very, very harsh on women. If you're not the perfect woman, they won't support you. And you know, when I was in high school, I was a very good athlete. And so when I came in to get on softball, basketball, you know, all the various teams, I was an -- you know, I had an older brother and I was his catcher, I was his, you know, point guard, I was his, you know, buddy when it came to athletics and so I became very athletic. And in high school we had this club, it was a leader's club or something, and it was the woman coach for athletics, and she had this little clique. And she had this little clique, and if you joined the club and became one of her sycophants, you invariably would wind up being on the team. Well, she couldn't keep me off the team because I was too good. Me and another woman, we came in as freshman, and I was a shortstop, and this other woman was the first baseman. And I'm sorry, but we were better than the seniors, and that's no brag. And so it wasn't that we -- and we both refused to join this little clique, but for the betterment of the team because she wanted to win, we were always put on the team. OK, but at the end of the year when she awarded the most valuable whatever, it was always her little club. And that -- that just, you know. So those kind of injustices have always you know, got my back up and so if I see them as a woman against a woman or another -- you know, a man against a woman or another woman against a woman, I'll always go to support the person who, you know, needs the support. I mean, I just -- that's just the way [it is?]

**Moon:**

Well, I think that's an important quality for women in politics because there has to be a way to train, you know --

**LeZotte:**

Yes.

**Moon:**

-- the younger generations, or to inspire them to want to become politically active when we live in such a, you know, acrimonious sort of political environment on, you know, the nationally and you know, at every -- almost at every level, and so I think that's a really important --

**LeZotte:**

And I think as I said earlier, I think women bring a different lens to every situation. I think that's a very, very important lens.

**Moon:**

I think they do too, and I think also that all of the candidates, you know, the preceding candidates all brought -- would all agree with that, that it was important that women were part of politics. Talking a little bit -- going backwards a little bit from something you had said, you had said that it was -- you felt that you had to do everything better because of the, you know, kind of the underlying sort of tensions that are there between women and politics, or maybe in the legal profession or in the professional life. I've been reviewing all these scrapbooks that Susie had put together from her you know, long tenure --

**LeZotte:**

She's got a wonderful -- wonderful friend of hers did that for her as a gift.

**Moon:**

Yeah, I mean they are really wonderful historical documents just of the time period as well as all the work that she had done, and in one of the articles that was presented in *The Mercury* in 1977, it was all about the women's hair and the hairdressers that both Janet and Susie went to, and it was apparently the same person who did their hair and it was the most ridiculous article ever (laughter). And I thought, "Oh my God, this is just like, so, you know" --

**LeZotte:**

Nothing has changed. I got two pieces of mail in my campaign just recently, and they cut out my picture and -- same person, and said, "Your hair. Do something about your hair." I think it's the best picture I've taken in years, but it was, "Your hair."

**Moon:**

Well, remember when Hillary was first going through, that -- when the Clintons were first, I mean, that was such a ridiculous thing and, you know, that they just focused on her appearance. And of course appearance is so --



**LeZotte:**

Oh, it's the first impression.

**Moon:**

They make it part of our culture anyway, but I just thought, "Oh my gosh," you know. And then the whole focus on -- that you know, the whole idea that they were homemakers becoming politicians, when in fact the majority of those women had been engaged in all kinds of political, you know, non-governmental sort of political activism through different community organizations and through the, you know, like Susie was very involved with the YWCA.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, yeah.

**Moon:**

And Janet had been doing all kinds of things with other types of environmental planning stuff that she was trying to promote. But they also at the same time kind of juxtaposed a whole, you know, kind of that housewife kind of turned politician as a way to say, "Look, we can offer a different --

**LeZotte:**

Lens.

**Moon:**

--"Different lens and a different perspective," and that worked at that time, and I --

**LeZotte:**

But it's the ridiculous things, it's the subtle things, it's the petty things that people will use against women to put them down. Like, "Oh, her hair. How can you take her seriously when her hair looks like that? How can you take her seriously when she dresses like that?" I mean, no one would ever say that about a man.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

You know, it's just -- you know, "Oh gosh, you didn't -- you know, that wasn't a very good argument to put forward," not that he's -- it was a stupid argument because his pants were short. You know, I mean it's always -- I remember when I was first practicing law down here, and pantsuits were the rage. And a couple of women went into court in pantsuits and the judge threw them out and said you will come into my courtroom wearing a dress. And then we wore pantsuits. You know, in protest.

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

And so it was just like, "Like that had anything to do with the woman's legal ability," whether or not she wore a dress or a pantsuit.

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

I mean, and it's those kind of subtle -- you know, anybody who's faced discrimination, it really is never relevant to the issue or to what they're saying, it's always about -- it's trying to deflect the criticism to something that they can't, you know.

**Moon:**

Mm-hmm. So how was it that you went from the law practice to having an interest in work on the Planning Commission and go forward into your other elements of politics?

**LeZotte:**

It's genetic. I'm an Irish-Catholic from New York, so it's what we do.

**Moon:**

Oh (laughter).

**LeZotte:**

No, I first became involved in politics when I was 15. Robert Kennedy was running for the Senate in New York, and he's my hero. And when he decided to run for the Senate I told my dad, I said, "I have to help him win." And I wasn't driving at the time, and so my father used to have to take me around to the campaign headquarters and things like that. And it was really him and what he stood for. He was a very wealthy person, who, from my mind, was looking out for those who had the least in our society. And I just thought that that was wonderful. And that was truly public service. I didn't look at him as a politician, I looked at him as a public servant, and that's how I've always viewed what I do. You know, I'm not worried about what other people think about it. I look at it as I'm doing a public service. And so I became very interested in him and what he stood for, worked on his campaign, and it was like, you know, it was in my blood [for me?].

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible) and when I came out here, we moved out here in '66, and then he was assassinated you know, that --

**Moon:**

Late '60s.

**LeZotte:**

-- summer, and -- or the next summer, and you know, I swore off politics until I met Jackie Spears.

**Moon:**

When did you meet Jackie?

**LeZotte:**

When she came back from Jonestown, it was probably about maybe a year. It was before she ran for Leo's seat.

**Moon:**

OK.

**LeZotte:**

First foray was to run for Leo's seat.

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

And then she ran for supervisor. So that's -- I don't know what year that was.

**Moon:**

I don't know either, I'm trying to remember when John F. --

**LeZotte:**

Well, it had to have been in the '70s, because I was --

**Moon:**

'70s, right. '74?

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, because I --

**Moon:**

'75?

**LeZotte:**

-- graduated from -- my undergraduate degree was in '73, so it would maybe have been '75, '76.

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

And so that's when I met her. And then I met her and, you know, again I thought, "Here is a person who truly believes in public service," I mean she almost was killed and just wanted to go

back in and finish Leo's term and then continued to do that the more I talked to her and worked with her, and really thought that, you know, this is the type of politician I want to support. You know, I had a choice of a whole bunch of politics because now I was, you know, I mean, it was in my blood.

**Moon:**  
Right.

**LeZotte:**

This was the type of person I wanted to support. And then from then on I just, you know, picked and chose the people that I wanted to support and then when I moved back down here, because I was living -- when I moved back down here from San Francisco, you know, I started becoming active in my neighborhood and I started talking to my current councilmember who, as it turns out, was in my rotary. And I was getting involved locally in the Bar, the county Bar, and you know, just working on that, and became the chair of the Women Lawyers Committee and was working on things in the '80s. And you know, meeting people, talking to people locally in politics and getting involved and working on campaigns, and decided that, you know, I really -- there were things environmentally that I was getting interested in and wanted to do on the Planning Commission. I was concerned about the direction and so I get on the Planning Commission and then the opportunity presented itself when Trixie was -- [turned out to run?]. I'd helped to get a lot of people elected and I figured, you know, I'm going to -- this is my time. I wasn't married, I was a solo practitioner, and so it was all on me as far as who would I affect by doing this, you know. And as it turned out, I met my husband right before I started campaigning and then we got married two months after I took office. So you know, that kind of was like the evolution of it.

**Moon:**

Now on the -- your interest in the Planning Commission was largely based on your convictions for preserving the environment?

**LeZotte:**

Environment and land use and how we did that. How to preserve the environment through land use decisions. I'd worked for -- the attorney I was working for when I met Jackie did a lot of land use up in San Mateo county, and he was kind of a preservationist as well.

**Moon:**  
OK.

**LeZotte:**

And so that's kind of -- I started -- I was always sort of interested in the environment, but then how the environment and land use --

**Moon:**  
Came together.

**LeZotte:**

Came together, and so that's kind of what I wanted to do.

**Moon:**

I used to work as a land use research consultant.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, really?

**Moon:**

I was -- I'm not a science-based person, but I worked for this public history firm where we worked for all these different clients trying to look at the environmental, you know, impact of property and trying to look at -- it was all based on EPA sort of lawsuit stuff, but it was a real interesting --

**LeZotte:**

Where'd you do that?

**Moon:**

I did that in Santa Barbara, I worked for a company there, it was called PHR Environmental. Now they've gone on to -- it started out as a small little organization, and then they did pretty well and they sold the company to a larger kind of conglomerate. But it was an interesting experience because it gave you --

**LeZotte:**

Oh, yeah.

**Moon:**

You know, it gave you a context for understanding, you know, how badly policies have shaped --

**LeZotte:**

Oh, absolutely.

**Moon:**

-- kind of the evolution of where we are today I think. Now looking at your work on the city Planning Commission, what were some of the policies that you felt that you really helped spearhead, or that were your accomplishments on that commission?

**LeZotte:**

I think a lot of the smart -- Smart growth was starting up, you know, about pedestrian orientation and lack of cars and you know, one of the things -- sort of fashioning projects that, you know, were so car-centric into something that was pedestrian-centric.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

And so those were a lot of the things that we worked on. The riparian (inaudible) policy, you know, making sure that when we built close to the riparian, you know, how that was going to be fashioned, that was something that we worked on. And then the airport was in the Planning Commission. We did the airport master plan and tried to restrict that.

**Moon:**

And then in '98 you ran for city council.

**LeZotte:**

Yes.

**Moon:**

And was that because your term for the commission had ended, or?

**LeZotte:**

No, no, it was because Trixie [returned out?].

**Moon:**

Oh, OK. So it was really --

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, it was an opening. It was an opening seat. It was an open seat, yeah.

**Moon:**

OK.

**LeZotte:**

It was an open seat.

**Moon:**

And when you answered the city council, you were working -- I think actually you started before Gonzales was mayor, is that right?

**LeZotte:**

No.

**Moon:**

No, OK.

**LeZotte:**

We gave -- Cindy, Ron, and I were elected the same year.

**Moon:**

At the same time, OK. Well, gosh, there's been some -- I'm sure you must have some interesting insights on some of the things that are going on presently that you may not want to comment on, but looking at your work on the council at that time, can you describe some of the people that

you worked with and some of the issues that you dealt with and some of the -- you know, maybe some of the personality conflicts that you might have encountered. I know that in one article that I read it said that you were like, the minority vote on a number or different issues in the council, and I wasn't quite sure if that was entirely accurate, or --

**LeZotte:**

It's not. It's not. It was usually -- couple of things. One was city hall. Me and Alice Woody and then me and Chuck were opposed. So there was that. You know, I voted against the mayor's budget twice, his first year and his second year. I was -- I think what they probably should have said is I was in the minority and maybe not the minority.

**Moon:**

Yeah, that's --

**LeZotte:**

It could have been there were times when I was the minority, it could have been I was the minority lots of times regarding city hall.

**Moon:**

Yeah. Well, that was one of the main things that they had mentioned was that you weren't necessarily in the support of the city -- so you weren't in support of this new complex that they were building.

**LeZotte:**

No, I didn't want it to be here.

**Moon:**

Oh. Where did --

**LeZotte:**

And I didn't want it, and it's totally screwed up environmentally.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

The original building was supposed to be half this [pull?] and was supposed to go down Santa Clara Street.

**Moon:**

Yeah, I think I remember reading something about that.

**LeZotte:**

And then the wind was supposed to go this way. And that's -- from a wind standpoint, from a sunshine standpoint, from the -- environmentally -- you know, when you cite buildings

environmentally to get, you know, the [leads accreditation?] or to get the biggest bank out of the natural environment, there's ways to site a building and this is perhaps the worse way.

**Moon:**

Mm-hmm.

**LeZotte:**

OK? So we're not taking advantage of the wind, we're not taking advantage of the sunlight. I mean, the Southern sun comes right in here and it's just -- anyway. So I also wanted it to be over in the Mitchell block.

**Moon:**

Uh-huh.

**LeZotte:**

Or, my first choice was that it be -- did you go to Cirque du Soleil?

**Moon:**

I didn't, but I know --

**LeZotte:**

Do you know where it was?

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

That's where I wanted it to go. We own that land.

**Moon:**

Oh, I didn't realize.

**LeZotte:**

We own that land.

**Moon:**

Oh.

**LeZotte:**

And so we own that land, we own where the old city hall is, we own where the police department is, we own all of that land so we could've built it there and had all the parking, you know, then we could've had access to the old city hall and stuff.

**Moon:**

Right.



**LeZotte:**

So that's where I thought it should have been. The second thought after -- that was where Alice Woody and I wanted to be, was there. And then, you know, they did a half-ass job about it but you know, the other -- the other building that's sitting completely vacant is the blue building, the Sabratto building, that you know, we could have gone in there and they could have built the council chambers, you know, somewhere in the vicinity. But you know, that didn't work either. So that was my main thing. And then, they weren't going to make it -- it was an afterthought to make it green, to make it environmentally sound. I mean, I'll never forget when they put the first budget out and they said, "And if you want to add this, this, this," and it was all the environmental things you could do. As an "and."

**Moon:**

Rather than (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

**LeZotte:**

And they still haven't. I mean, this carpet should not be rolled carpet, it should be squares. Because if I were to spill a cup of coffee here, or you know, as I'm roll -- you know, good years on this, they're going to have to take up the whole dark thing as opposed to replacing just the square.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

You know, so there's a whole bunch of things that they could do, that were -- that door doesn't have to be solid, it could be -- it could be bamboo. You know, I mean there's just tons and tons of things that they could do in here that could've made this even more, you know, environmentally sound.

**Moon:**

When you were on the council, were there specific issues that you really wanted to -- that you thought you championed while -- during --

**LeZotte:**

The environment.

**Moon:**

The environment.

**LeZotte:**

The environment, yeah. We would have no environmental policy, we'd have no green building policy, we'd have no energy policy, I mean there are a lot of -- lot of different environmental policies that are in place now that I championed, you know, led the council on. You know, like I spoke at the UN Council of Mayors -- not the Mayor. You know, I pushed and finally got the mayor to sign on to the UN accords. Got the city to sign on to sustainable Silicon Valley which is all about reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

Green building. [I?] had the first certified green library in the world, and we're going to have a teen center as well. You know, so all of the things about green building that makes it our -- you know, the biggest problem that the city has right now is we have money to build capital projects, we don't have money for staff or for operating.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

And so by putting up, maybe, a little more money to make it green, you reduce some of the operating and maintenance, and you can't get that across to people.

**Moon:**

Right. Well, this actually of all the places you could live is a pretty good place for environmentalism, but it certainly is --

**LeZotte:**

So I mean, so I've championed the environment, I've also championed the disabled.

**Moon:**

Yeah, that was another question I had for you.

**LeZotte:**

The disabled. You know, I married late [didn't I tell you?]? I have one cousin who has a daughter who has cerebral palsy, but in my whole extended family, you know, that's the only child that, you know, has any kind of a disability. But again it goes back to what women bring to the table. You know, Jim Bell's a big advocate for the disabled. I think he would be even if he didn't have a stepson who's disabled.

**Moon:**

OK.

**LeZotte:**

But, you know, I come to this just plain and simply because it's something that needs championed.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

It needs championed. And so I've always been -- you know, my undergraduate study's in behavioral science and I had at one time thought of working as a teacher or a person with the developmentally disabled. Very interested in autism. And so I've always -- the disabled community is someone who needs a voice. You know, and the BTA was -- couple or three years ago when they were looking to raise fares and cut service, the first people they went after were the disabled and the seniors.

**Moon:**  
Oh.

**LeZotte:**  
Raising fares, cutting service, you know, it was just immoral. And so I got a whole bunch of them to go down and speak in front of the BTA board and had them call my colleagues, I told them who was on the BTA board, told them to call them, come up and meet. And they turned staff down (inaudible). So you know, it's just, you need an advocate.

**Moon:**  
You definitely need advocates for all these sorts of (inaudible). Now you also were a part of the school-city partnerships, what was that about? That was something that I had read that you were -- see if I can find this one here. That doesn't ring a bell with me.

**LeZotte:**  
Well, I mean, I think I've always -- you know, we've always worked -- I have a very good relationship with the schools. The city-county liaison is what I am, but we've always had a good partnership with the schools in my council district, Moreland School District. In fact, I have a meeting with them this afternoon.

**Moon:**  
OK.

**LeZotte:**  
So I mean, that's one of the things that I made sure is that -- to continue something that Trixie did was to make sure that we have very good working relationships with the -- with my school -- with the school districts in district 1. Part of the reason is that there's a very bizarre phenomenon with regard to the west side of town, particularly district 1. And Trixie fought, and the councilmember before I did fought, and have fought and continue to fight, is that number one, we're wealthy, number two, we have no gangs, number three, you know, all our kids are happy, healthy, and wise, and number three, we don't need any services out there. So every time there's a, you know, "Let's do a new program, Smart Start or do this," and, "Let's put it in District 5 and District 7." Well, excuse me. You know, district 1 has the same exact problems. I actually had one of my colleagues, when we did a gang [abatement?] in my council district, say, "Gangs?" "Why, yeah. Yeah." You know, that's how little people know. So it's been a very difficult thing making sure that we get resources with schools and for kids at my council district, because even staff, when they do things with regard to notification, there's this, "What's out there?" I remember when we were rolling out our Street Smarts program, our traffic calming program, the

most west they would go to hold a community meeting was Bellarmine. That's this side of 17<sup>th</sup>. My whole council district goes all the way out to Cupertino. And my people are supposed to go to Bellarmine? I mean, so this is -- there's this ingrained thing with (inaudible) staff. They'll have four community meetings, and they won't go past Highway 17, to [hold?] the [community?]. And that's -- the whole council district is west of Highway 17.

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

And so it's just this -- so when it comes to the school, you know, I may have been on that initially just to get my schools, make sure that my schools were part of any thought process with regard to making schools become more active and you know, it might have been something very early on.

**Moon:**

I think what they were saying was that you had had a long history of working on city-school partnership initiatives prior to your planning work.

**LeZotte:**

No.

**Moon:**

No? Well, that's interesting.

**LeZotte:**

You're the second person that has said that, and I (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

**Moon:**

It must be -- it's in some sort of *Mercury* news clipping I think, or something, but. Well, anyway, that's not --

**LeZotte:**

No, because I don't have children.

**Moon:**

Yeah, that's interesting. Well, anyway (laughter), that was one question that I just wanted to ask you about because I wasn't quite sure of what you'd actually done in that regard. Now in -- kind of going backwards a little bit and talking about the whole campaign process, what was it like when you were -- when you first had started your first campaign, who were the people that supported you? I noticed that in one article they said that you had, you know, used a grassroots sort of approach to your campaign; you walked the precincts. And this reminded me of a conversation I recently had with Susie Wilson because she followed the same pattern in doing a precinct walking sort of methodology, and --

**LeZotte:**

My husband and I walked the entire council district twice. 69, 67 precincts, between me and my walkers. And I didn't -- you know, and I didn't have a lot. The Labor Council was trying to get Cindy elected to the city council so, you know, I had precinct walkers from them at the very, very last week and it [wasn't?] helpful because all my material was out. So it was very grassroots because I had been a neighborhood community activist, and so we had worked you know, about gangs and brining, you know -- had formed a neighborhood association, I was involved in the neighborhood association. So when it came time for me to run for office, you know, I had friends that I had acquired as Planning Commissioner, but then I had friends in the neighborhood. And so it was very, very much grassroots.

**Moon:**

What was the name of the neighborhood association?

**LeZotte:**

It's the Boynton Community Association, B-o-y-n-t-o-n. [Still with?] this.

**Moon:**

Yeah, that's one of the interesting things about San Jose, is that there's a number of neighborhood associations. I've never lived in a place that's had so many.

**LeZotte:**

And it's usually -- they usually get galvanized around an issue, and our issue was the gangs and the --

**Moon:**

The gangs.

**LeZotte:**

And some apartment buildings that are really struggling, they're bad.

**Moon:**

So who were your main supporters, and were there particular groups that were helping you do some of the --

**LeZotte:**

Well, actually it was a lot of friends and family and small groups. Like I said, the labor people didn't come in 'til the very end. I had a couple of, you know, four, five guys from one of the unions would come regularly to help me walk, but it was mostly friends. Friends from the environmental community, friends from the neighborhood, some people that I had met as a planning commissioner. But it was very much not any big, organized groups.

**Moon:**

OK. I noticed that you did get endorsement from --

**LeZotte:**

Right, Susie and --

**Moon:**

Susie and Susan.

**LeZotte:**

Susie and Susan.

**Moon:**

Susan Hammer.

**LeZotte:**

Well, you know, when I went looking, the two people -- when you're going to run for office there's three people you would talk to if you're a woman, and there's Janet, it's Susan Hammer, Susie Wilson, and Zoe.

**Moon:**

Uh-huh.

**LeZotte:**

And those are the people I talked to. And so they got their endorsements and moved forward, and Susan had a fundraiser for me and introduced me to a lot of people. You know, because I had been on the -- the planning commission is a very good place to start for several reasons. Number one, you meet a lot of the movers and shakers.

**Moon:**

OK.

**LeZotte:**

OK. When I say that, you meet people who are developing property, you know, either developers or you meet -- you know, you go to conferences and you meet other people and you meet neighbors who may be concerned about a project, so you get you know, both sides of it. And I would meet with everybody. If there was a project and the neighborhood wanted to meet with me, I met with them. If a developer wanted to meet with me, I met with the developer. So it's a good place to start. It's also a good place to start because so much of the policy and so much of what makes the city the city is our land use decisions. So if you've got that down, you've got you know, half of what the councilmember does. So the people that I had met there, you know, some college friends, lawy-- obviously I had friends in the legal community because I was still practicing law. So it was really friends and family and people that I had met in my practice.

**Moon:**

And so they also helped fund the campaign for you?

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, I raised -- the maximum I could raise I think was 87, and I think I raised 80 both times.

**Moon:**

Hmm, yeah.

**LeZotte:**

You know, and it was, you know, small, you could only raise it at 250, was the max. So I was raising, you know, 25, 50, 100, 250. I mean, it was a struggle to get there because I'd never run for anything, I'd never raised money.

**Moon:**

And you were running, initially in your first election you were running against the --

**LeZotte:**

The county sheriff.

**Moon:**

The county sheriff. And I thought that was interesting. They said in the news -- in the research that I did, that you actually got the endorsement of the police association, and I thought that was interesting that you were running against a sheriff --

**LeZotte:**

The sheriff, yeah. Well, that was political. I mean, the deputy sheriffs didn't like him.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

So that was that. And then, you know, then I got the -- but they went along with the POA, I got the POA endorsement which helped a lot, San Jose POA. And that helped a lot with convincing the sheriffs.

**Moon:**

Right. And the POA is the police --

**LeZotte:**

San Jose.

**Moon:**

Yeah, OK. Well, that was -- so what kind of lessons did you learn from your first campaign that has helped you since?

**LeZotte:**

Well, I mean I think it's all about -- you know, they say all politics is local. It's all about the grassroots and the local. I mean, you can raise all the money in the world, but it's all about the voters.

**Moon:**

Right. I think that's a really interesting point. My bigger research project takes place in the post -- the immediate period of the post-suffrage movement, and so I'm doing this work on this one woman I'm trying to write a biography of, and she says the exact same thing and so it's interesting how you can really just -- that really is kind of the center for --

**LeZotte:**

And the person I ran against knew nothing about the city. He had been a cop and he had been a bit of a shark, and he was, you know, he was looking to get another pension.

**Moon:**

And what was the margin of the -- do you recall?

**LeZotte:**

I beat him by -- you know, the three races I had the highest percentage -- I beat him by like, 400 votes.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

But you know, people don't come out. It's so [down?] ballot.

**Moon:**

Right. So moving on to your next, after your -- you went from that election and then you served your term and then you went through another election --

**LeZotte:**

Reelection, yeah, yeah.

**Moon:**

And so did you find that --

**LeZotte:**

The reelection was, you know, I had one of the guys that did run against me before, and he just -- I mean he really -- as he said, he loves me. You know, he just had issues. OK, so I easily won reelection. You know, unless you have somebody really strong running against you, I'd easily win the election. And then all I did was raise, I think about \$20,000, put out some mail just to let people know what I've done in the last four years. You know, and then easily won reelection.

**Moon:**

How do you interact with, you know, your precincts? Do you feel like, you know, you have to visiting different sort of community centers and doing that sort of work?

**LeZotte:**



Oh yeah, you need to get out there. Well, I do a couple of things. Every year I have a festival in the park. It's a citywide festival in the park. It's both a festival and a resource fair. And then I have -- we have these community cleanups every year and I go to all of them. And then when we'll be doing the strong neighborhood initiatives, I too -- I was there at every community meeting, every workshop, everything to find out what my community want. You know, you have -- you try to go to the PTA meetings, go to all these different things. One of the issues with district 1 is it is very, very difficult. Most of my neighborhood associations and community groups are west -- are east of Lawrence Expressway. People west of Lawrence Expressway want to come out for community cleanup, they love it, they love me, you know, but when [I thought?], "How can we get another one?" I said, "Well, just form a neighborhood association." Unless there's an issue to coalesce people, they don't form neighborhood associations, and so -- and that's the -- you know, if you go out to the PTAs you're just reaching people who have children. So it's very difficult to get out, you know, to that part of town other than on a community cleanup or this -- the citywide festival. You know, and then my last six years I've had a website that's gotten progressively better and that's been very good because my e-mail addresses have increased and so I send out my e-mail, my e-mail newsletter, to I don't know, 4 or 500 people.

**Moon:**

Who are the people that really provide kind of the undergirding support for the work that you've been doing? Have you worked with the same assistants through your process?

**LeZotte:**

You mean staff?

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

City staff? My own staff? My own staff here?

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

No, they've all changed.

**Moon:**

They've all changed.

**LeZotte:**

They've all changed, yes.

**Moon:**

OK. I know -- you know Leigh Stuverson, right?

**LeZotte:**

Leigh Strudeman (sp?)?

**Moon:**

Strudeman, yeah.

**LeZotte:**

At Jim's office, yeah.

**Moon:**

Yeah. I'm going to be interviewing her tomorrow and she's done a lot of work, you know, working kind of under, you know, behind the scenes sort of stuff and so I just was curious if you had worked with her or somebody like her.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, I did -- when I have issues about the disabled community, I have some (inaudible). Absolutely. But I mean as far as the environment, there's a whole litany of environmentalists that I work with, so I've got a whole environmental community I deal with. I've got a whole group of people who are on the planning commission and off the planning commission that I talk to about land use. You know, there's some developers that I trust, that are -- they're not quite career developers, so I can sit down and I can talk to them not only about their project, but about other projects. So like, I've talked to a couple of people about north San Jose and Coyote to get these kind of different perspectives. So there's friends that you make, and then I have -- you know, everybody says I have the best staff on the floor. They're all very, very, very bright, you know. But you know, like the guy who was my environmental aide for two years is now Judy Chirco's chief of staff.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

And then I stole my chief of staff from Pat Dando. So you know, but people come in, like I had one young lady for a while, she had come over from Elaine Alquist's office, and I had her for two or three years and then she decided she was getting married, she needed to make more money and a better pension, she went over to redevelopment. You know, and so people --

**Moon:**

Move around.

**LeZotte:**

People move around, yeah.

**Moon:**

Right. In looking at the work that you have done, and in your campaigns you were mostly campaigning on environmental sort of green sort of issues?

**LeZotte:**

I think that and public safety, and the disabled, and neighborhood issues. I mean, but the environment is always, always --

**Moon:**

Always key.

**LeZotte:**

Always key.

**Moon:**

OK. Now you also have done a lot of community activism also, and some of the things that are noted include your work with the Girl Scouts, the YWCA, the Downtown Business Association and some of the more business-oriented sort of places.

**LeZotte:**

Well, I'm a business attorney.

**Moon:**

Yeah, of course, and so then you were also part of the Health -- what was it called? The Health Start Board for the Anderson Village School?

**LeZotte:**

Yes, Healthy Start, right, right.

**Moon:**

OK, Healthy Start.

**LeZotte:**

That was before I was a councilmember actually.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, they wanted -- they needed someone from the community. It was when we were having a Healthy Start program out there for you know, because like I said, Anderson is probably the poorest school in the Moreland school district, and poor in the sense that you know, the kids that come there are from needy families in the neighborhood. And so they had a Healthy Start program, it was a [Hood?] brand that they had gotten, and they wanted someone from the community and so I had volunteered because I was my own person, I was working for myself so I could go when it was in the mornings and stuff and making sure that the kids had, you know, and it sort of served me well because one of the first times that I challenged the major was on the children's healthcare initiative.

**Moon:**

Right, that was one of the things that I had read.

**LeZotte:**

But then I was on -- you know, I gave legal advice for two years to RAFT before I was invited to come on their board. Now I'm on the board of the Presentation Centers, on the board of the Salvation Army --

**Moon:**

And what is RAFT again?

**LeZotte:**

RAFT is Resource Area for Teachers.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

It's all about -- they get castoffs and unused things from industry and they turn them into --

**Moon:**

Usable --

**LeZotte:**

Math and science and musical instruments, it's really -- it's just wonderful.

**Moon:**

So it's like a recycling program in a way.

**LeZotte:**

It is. It is, on a big scale.

**Moon:**

Oh, well, that's interesting. Were you ever involved with the Toxic -- I'm trying to think of the name of it --

**LeZotte:**

Toxics Coalition?

**Moon:**

The Toxics Coalition?

**LeZotte:**

I've worked with them. I worked with them, in fact I got an award. Where is my award? There it is right there. Community Partner Award, it's from the LA Toxics Coalition for my work on the endocrine disruptors, which is the -- and that's why I was one of the leaders on (inaudible) bill about getting prescription drugs out of the water system. And I worked with the city to get us to not use chemicals in our, you know, when we clean up or maintain our parks and things.

They used -- it was a compound that was being used, it was -- could have potentially been an end-disrupter, so we -- right. So a lot of the toxic stuff, I've worked with them.

**Moon:**

Well, I have somebody right now who's trying to convince the library to bring in the papers of that organization.

**LeZotte:**

Oh!

**Moon:**

And so we're looking into that right now.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, good.

**Moon:**

So I was just curious if, you know, with all the environmental stuff that you've been doing I thought perhaps you would have come in contact with that organization.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Ted, absolutely.

**Moon:**

Yeah, Ted --

**LeZotte:**

Smith.

**Moon:**

Smith is his last name, I think? OK. Now I'm thinking about -- and looking more broadly about this project, you know, looking at feminism and kind of the role of feminist organizations in promoting women's activism in work and politics, were you involved with any national organizations, specific women's organizations that you felt were important?

**LeZotte:**

Yeah. I was a member of the California Women -- what is it? CWL. California Women Lawyers Association when I was a lawyer. I was on the statewide -- one of the lawyers commission, and one of the things that I worked on for two years was we put on statewide women's health seminars. That was very important to me, I did that. I was a member of the county Bar and a member of the Women Lawyers Committee and actually was president of the Women Lawyers Committee, working, you know, helping women through the legal system become lawyers and mentoring them. I was part of -- you know, just, I mean you become a member of NOW and you become a member of you know, that, and I think I was even on the California Foundation. But right now, you know, several of the locals -- we have the Women's

Alliance and the Women's Caucus that we're forming and have formed, for the non-profits locally, all the women elected officials of -- yeah.

**Moon:**

Right. CWIRE.

**LeZotte:**

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible) members of that. No, not CWIRE. I was on CWIRE as well. No, this is something local.

**Moon:**

Oh, it's a local group.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, it's a local thing that -- it started with Cindy and Liz Kniss and me, Susan, Kathleen King, and Judy Kleinberg. It's a local, one's the caucus and one's the alliance. And one's, you know, 501C3, just education, then the other one's going to be a political, you know, [pack?].

**Moon:**

Oh, OK.

**LeZotte:**

And I think we just finished our paperwork for the non-profit --

**Moon:**

So that's just kind of a starting organization?

**LeZotte:**

Well, it started over -- you know, well over a year ago but with both of us and so many of us involved in campaigns it's going to be really --

**Moon:**

Right, hard to get everything off the ground.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Moon:**

Were you involved at all in the Commission on the Status of Women activities in San Jose?

**LeZotte:**

Just a little, but not a lot. A little. You know, just following him, supporting him.

**Moon:**

Right. One of the things that Susie Wilson had said was that the organization that was probably mo-- very helpful to her when she was in her early campaigns was the National Women's Political Caucus.

**LeZotte:**

NWPC, yeah. It just -- early on I was -- you know, when I was in the Planning Commission and when I was, you know, helping work out, the NWPC here locally was pretty substantial and now it's not.

**Moon:**

Right, it's really diminished quite considerably, is my understanding. Which -- well, maybe that's because women have gotten more parity a little, you know.

**LeZotte:**

Well, I think part of it is that, part of it is what -- you know, it's tough when you're tied to a national organization. You know, like we put on a fundraises and tied ourselves with the Women's Partnership back in Washington, and we helped raise some money for them for something and then they were going to help us with our fledgling group, and you know, help us. And we sort of modeled ourselves a little bit after them. But trying to work with a national organization locally, it just -- they don't always meld, and so that's why we started our own thing.

**Moon:**

Do you think like with the local women's caucus and the political organizations that you're forming, that that's a real necessity to help women?

**LeZotte:**

I think it is, but we need to -- you know, one of the early struggles is should we be bipartisan, or partisan? Because you know, there's a lot of women's -- you know, there's DAWN, Democratic Activists for Women and stuff. You know, I was a major part of that organization for years and years on their board.

**Moon:**

Is DAWN still that active?

**LeZotte:**

Mm, it's marginal.

**Moon:**

Do you know Joan Goddard?

**LeZotte:**

Mm-hmm.

**Moon:**

Yeah, Joan actually was part of the DAWN, or still is involved, [that I've been?].

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, yeah, I was on the board for years.

**Moon:**

Oh, OK. I haven't -- I don't know that much about that organization at all.

**LeZotte:**

Well, they've lost their worth.

**Moon:**

Yeah. Now I think that's also true with the National Women's Political Caucus, though they were a non-partisan organization here in San Jose, they were really a democratic sort of organization so --

**LeZotte:**

You know, so we have this, we don't want to reproduce that. So that's why there's the educational kind of foundation, are we going to, you know, start looking at legislation? And then there's the political end of maybe becoming a [pact?]. And that's where, "OK, are we non-partisan, are we partisan?" And I think what we've decided to be is -- model ourselves after the democratic form, which is definitely Democratic, and that's what we've decided to model ourselves after that from the political standpoint. And you know, I just think we got to -- it's so, like I said, you know, one of the concerns I have with some women's organization, if you're not the perfect woman they just -- you know.

**Moon:**

Yeah. But I think also --

**LeZotte:**

Women are just tough on one --

**Moon:**

They are, and I think there's a lot of jealousy that takes place within those organization. Like the National Women's Political Caucus, apparently there is -- you know, women were hesitant. There was this younger woman, Jennifer Myronuk, have you met her? She's doing kind of film documentary work and she also was a very active member in the caucus as well as the Commission on the Status of Women, and she's actually really interesting. She's really young, she's only like, 32, and she's got -- she's been doing this for like ten years, which I think is really interesting from a young woman's sort of perspective. But she was trying to document them through oral history and they were like, "Oh," you know, there was like, this competition factor of whether or not they wanted to talk with her.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, wow.

**Moon:**



Eventually they did, and so I just thought that, you know, there is this kind of like, competition that seems to be present. You know, in the same way that I suppose there's competition for men when they're in politics, but maybe not. Maybe in a different -- expressed in a different way.

**LeZotte:**

It's different, it's just like, you know, they get a pass.

**Moon:**

Yeah, yeah. So looking at, you know, even though you're deciding to go with a Democratic sort of focus for that organization, would you say -- what do you think some of the issues are that we could have some consensus building between you know, the left and the right and with women in particular?

**LeZotte:**

I think children's health. Children's healthcare. Domestic violence. Foster kids.

**Moon:**

Have you been able to work collaboratively with other Republican women specifically?

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, I mean, I think, you know, Pat was very involved in the -- Pat Dando, you know, was [Richard's?] Vice Mayor. She was in charge after Alice Woody left. She was the liaison for the Domestic Violence Council and you know, I walk and everything. I mean, it wasn't about partisan, it was about --

**Moon:**

Right, about the issues.

**LeZotte:**

The issues. Children's healthcare.

**Moon:**

Well, in looking at, you know, all of the work that you've done, you've had -- obviously you've had a little bit easier time of trying to balance your family life since you don't have children, so that's a little bit different sort of process. But how is it, you know, trying to balance the whole public life, you know, and being out there in the public and trying to have a private life at the same time?

**LeZotte:**

You know, what's really good is my husband goes to almost everything with me. You know, like Chuck Reed, his wife doesn't go to anything. He says, "I'm not going to bore her to death," and you know, occasionally he'll bring her to something, I don't know, something. But, you know, and it's because she's got her own business -- not business, she's, you know, accomplished and has her own thing, and quite frankly probably has a lot of work to do and doesn't have the time for it. My husband retired in December. You know, since we've been

married he's worked, he had a position where he was, you know, semi-retired working 30 hours. And he was apolitical, a Republican, and this was totally new to him. Absolutely new to him, had never been really much involved in politics and so, you know, I haven't bored him yet. There are times when I bore him, but he comes to practically everything with me, you know, on a social level. You know, whether it's a Monday Night Live tonight or whether it's a -- and you know, he comes to community meetings with me, you know, if he has the time. You know, but he's a big, big volunteer himself and so there are times when you know, his volunteerism conflicts with something I need to do.

**Moon:**

Right. So you're both really great, big social activists.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. And so it's been great having a partner like that who, you know, just dove in and you know, it's still fun. I mean, he's getting to the point where, you know, these (inaudible) out of my term, but you know, so that's been very, very helpful. But it is hard. I mean, we're newly married, you know, and I don't -- I mean the last two Tuesdays I've gotten home at, you know, after 1 o'clock. For me that's hard. All day, you know, I'd say about four hours yesterday or more was studying today's packet, and then you know, yesterday we were interviewed by the press and so it's al-- you know, it is these constant interruptions, you know, particularly with what's going on now. But you know, you need to balance it and I tend to internalize a lot so I get very, very -- you know, I internalize my stress. And you know, and so sometimes I'm not communicative or I'm not there as he puts it, and says, "Where do you go?" We're sitting there, he'll just be talking to me and I'm not there, he goes, "Where do you go, and can I come with you?" You know, so I just go off and so you know, that's how I process it. You know, it can be a little isolating and so, you know, he's very good and he's very funny so he can draw that out of me. But the fact that he would rather come with me than stay home is very helpful to me. The fact that he does all the cooking is very helpful to me. If I had to come home and worry about putting dinner together, getting home at 7, 8 o'clock at night, or midnight, you know, I mean, it wouldn't be working.

**Moon:**

I don't know how Cindy does it having such a young child.

**LeZotte:**

Well, Michael's very good. Michael's very good. I think, you know, she has help, but I don't know how she does it either.

**Moon:**

Have you ever thought about running for mayor?

**LeZotte:**

No.

**Moon:**

No, that doesn't interest you?

**LeZotte:**

I ran for Supervisor and lost.

**Moon:**

Right, right. Now would you like to at some point -- oh, I lost my -- I hope I didn't -- my badge fell off. Maybe I dropped it when I was at the car. Anyway, oops, I'm totally off the track here. Now do you have any aspirations to go on to higher office?

**LeZotte:**

I don't know, I don't know. You know, I could've run for the Assembly a couple years ago, well, six years ago, and I was a newlywed and that travel up and back to Sacramento was just not in the cards. You know, now that my husband's retired, that may be something I would consider. I just don't know. I'm going to go back and practice law.

**Moon:**

Those are your big plans?

**LeZotte:**

Well, and you know, I didn't leave the law because I didn't like it, I just left it to be into public service. So you know, and I want to do a little different law than I was doing. Land use or environmental law, you know I was an estate planner. So I'm going to do something a little more -- some of my passion is.

**Moon:**

Yeah, right, because you clearly have a passion for the environment and I had read something that you're really involved in trying to look at sustainability and natural resources and how you balance all of those issues with, you know, the other countering sort of --

**LeZotte:**

Having to have business, you know?

**Moon:**

Right. What would you like your legacy to be once you leave office if you don't go on?

**LeZotte:**

I think the environmental policies that are in place. I would really hope that the city of San Jose really starts believing in green, green building and sustainability and smart growth. I mean, you know, Coyote Valley we're talking about, I just -- I'm really concerned that we're not going to [limit?]. Really concerned. And you know, the environment's all we have. I mean, we have to leave something for our children and you know, that's probably the biggest thing. And you know, a heightened awareness of the disabled community; I hope someone picks that -- I'm going to talk to several of my colleagues. I hope somebody picks that up because it really needs to stay in the forefront. Those are the two things. I mean, the rest of it, you know, my colleagues, children's healthcare is a big deal for all of us. You know, smart building, affordable housing, you know, that's all I think the majority of the council. But you know, I'm the leader in

those two, three other issues, and I, you know, am very proud of, you know, the environmental stuff that we've done, that we've accomplished, you know, put San Jose on the map, we're building, you know, recognized, award-winning environmental buildings. You know, even the affordable housing project in my council district that I told [the guy?], "It'll make me happy, make it green," and it's won awards. It's won awards.

**Moon:**

And I'm looking at the long-term kind of history of what started as kind of a hyperbole over the feminist capital to where women are in politics today in San Jose. Do you feel that there has been a lot of continued progress from that time period?

**LeZotte:**

No, I think we're losing ground.

**Moon:**

That's what I -- that's my perception too.

**LeZotte:**

We're losing ground. We're losing ground. And we're losing ground because women aren't supporting women. Men aren't supporting women. And it's become very, very politicized as opposed to who's, you know, who's the right person for committee appointments, for the whole nine years. There is no woman -- no women apply for the Planning Commission and there are no women on the Planning Commission. When I was on the Planning Commission there were at least two of us, and there are none.

**Moon:**

Right, I mean, it was a remarkable time period in, you know, the --

**LeZotte:**

We're losing ground.

**Moon:**

The late '70s and early '80s and so there is kind of -- so how do we change that? What do we need to do to --

**LeZotte:**

Well, I think we need to become aware again. I mean, I think that a lot of it could have to do with economy and women are, you know, are working more than one job now and they've got the kids and because, you know, there's so much pressure on the family to just sustain, you know, the quality of life around here that you know, I think more expected of women when it comes to working and taking care of the family, and how could there possibly be time for politics, you know? And there isn't that sharing, you know? You know quite honestly I think that the -- subtly the right-wing Christian movement has had a lot to do with it. How could you possibly be a good mother and work and join politics? I mean, I had somebody write -- my campaign, I had somebody write to me about, "I just got your -- got one of your flyers, and I notice that you don't share your husband's last name. And quite frankly, that disturbs me that if

you don't honor your husband by taking his name, how will you honor your community?" And my husband wrote back and said, "You know, we got married late in life, Linda already had her career, you know, her name, and she honors me every day by being my wife and I, quite frankly, I'm fine with it." And the woman wrote back and said, "Well, I guess we have a difference of opinion, I'm just glad that my husband wears the pants in our family." I mean --

**LeZotte:**

Oh my God!

**Moon:**

My God.

**LeZotte:**

Oh my goodness!

**Moon:**

And, by the way, women don't belong in politics.

**Moon:**

Oh. Oh great.

**LeZotte:**

You know, so when you've got that kind of pressure and that kind of, you know, you really can't do it all, you know, I just don't think there's the support. You know, and I think women are entirely -- and I'll give a perfect example. I said DAWN, you know, DAWN is -- you asked me if it's going the way of the -- you know, I was on the board of DAWN for six years. I was a major supporter of DAWN before I ran for office and continued to be a major supporter of DAWN when I ran for office. I was on the interview committee, I worked on all of their endorsements for over six years. They did a [duel?] with me and a man.

**Moon:**

Really?

**LeZotte:**

What kind of an organization does that? What kind of a women's organization does that to one of their own?

**Moon:**

Right.

**LeZotte:**

You know, there was absolutely -- I mean, I was the perfect candidate. What kind of women's organization does that, and that's what I'm talking about. I mean, we haven't a clue how to support women. Now DAWN doesn't pack that big of a wallop, but it certainly is the antithesis or the epitome of how women aren't supporting women. Whether it's daycare, whether it's healthcare, whether it's, you know, whatever. We're losing ground big time. Big time.

**Moon:**

Well, I think that there's a real definite need for more activism and I was thinking -- I had gone to the League of Women Voters luncheon and then I also went to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom branch in San Jose and both organizations are really aging organizations, and they don't have a lot of new blood in those groups.

**LeZotte:**

(inaudible) Look at the League of Women Voters.

**Moon:**

And I just wonder what the future is of those two groups in particular, and particularly the League. I've been doing a lot of study on the League from its inception following, you know, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment victory, but they're very old organizations and -- literally, in the membership -- and I don't know how you inspire young women to become part of those organizations. The only area that I see really great, tremendous interest by young women is in the International Museum in San Francisco. I don't know if you've seen their website, but they really are inspiring young women to --

**LeZotte:**

There's this age group between me and the young women that are in my office that lost it.

**Moon:**

Yeah.

**LeZotte:**

The new women are -- you know --

**Moon:**

They've got much more --

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, yeah. And so there's this middle, this age group that's in the 30, 40, 50. 30s and 40s that just don't -- I told you I was a president for the Women Lawyers Committee, and we had a real good core; we used to put on fundraisers, we used to give out scholarships, and we would do all of these things, and as those of us, you know, I took it over from the group that started -- you know, my age took it over from the group that started and then we handed it off to the next group, and after that there was nobody to hand it off to. And it just died. It just -- I mean, the Women Lawyers Committee still exists, but, you know, once a year they put on a judge's --

**Moon:**

Yeah, luncheon or something.

**LeZotte:**

Dinner or something. But we used to do all sorts of things. You know, and I'm not -- I'm a member of the Bar, but I'm not a member of the Women Lawyers Committee anymore because I

just don't go to meetings and you know, when I go back to practice law I'll probably, you know, join a couple of committees, but you know, there's just that 30, 40ish age group that just lost it.

**Moon:**

Wonder if it was because of the, you know, the backlash to the ERA.

**LeZotte:**

Well, I think it was the -- when was the uprising of Newt Gingrich and the Christian Right? You know, and [should just?] be home. You should be, you know, take care of, you know, you can't be -- oh, and listen to that -- I'm sorry, that hypocrite Dr. Laura.

**Moon:**

Oh my gosh (laughter).

**LeZotte:**

I mean, "And who's watching your kids? And you're going to have kids and you're going to work? What the hell do you do?" Telling these women, "You cannot have a child and work. You have one job, and that is to be a mother." But I believe she has a child.

**Moon:**

Yes, she does, and she worked during it.

**LeZotte:**

And she worked and, you know, so what does she do? He's so screwed up she shipped him off to the military, you know.

**Moon:**

Oh, well, there's a solution for you (laughter).

**LeZotte:**

But I mean, so I really believe that that's part of it. Whether subtly or overtly, it's just --

**Moon:**

Yeah. Well, I think that there's -- you know, definitely a need for some, you know, good mentoring and it's good to see that you're doing some of that work. I mean, that's really important.

**LeZotte:**

Well, I think we need to maybe do a little more of it.

**Moon:**

Yeah. I think that's where I really like Cindy too, because I think she's really good at, you know, presenting a younger, you know, women's perspective.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, with a child.

**Moon:**

You know, with a child, and here she's, you know, really juggling. You know, obviously she's getting help doing it.

**LeZotte:**

Oh, sure.

**Moon:**

Which she would have to, especially with a young kid. But I don't know. Like, Zoe Lofgren, she had, you know, her babies when she was in the council and she was, you know, even breastfeeding at first when she first came into office which, you know, I think can you imagine how appalling that was to the men who were there? (laughter) But I think that it's really -- there's a lot of, you know, good potential advocates out there and politicians that need just to be cultivated, so.

**LeZotte:**

And there are leaders in other professions. I mean, engineers, mathematicians, scientists. I mean, I actually sometimes -- you know, because there's more women being admitted to law school than men right now. We don't need any more lawyers. We need scientists.

**Moon:**

We need scientists, exactly.

**LeZotte:**

We need someone to find a cure for the next pandemic. You know, and so when I talk to young women and they, you know, "What's it like being a lawyer and stuff?" I ask them, "How's your math and science?" "Oh, pretty good." "Don't waste it on being a lawyer." Go find the cure for something, please. Discover something, you know. You know, because the years when we're -- shoved it out of engineering. That's too hard, can't possibly think -- when I played basketball, weren't allowed to run full court.

**Moon:**

Oh, because the --

**LeZotte:**

Not allowed to sweat.

**Moon:**

Oh, right. Oh (laughter). How ridiculous.

**LeZotte:**

I was a moving forward so I was allowed to, but we weren't allowed to run full court. Half court.

**Moon:**



Oh. That's crazy.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, we'd have to stop at the center line except for one of us.

**Moon:**

I had no idea that was restricted like that.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, yeah. That's the way the teams were made up. Couldn't run full court.

**Moon:**

Well, going back just to one last question on the ERA, were you involved with the ERA movement in the '80s when they were trying to go through the ratification process?

**LeZotte:**

Trying to think of where -- no, I was in law school.

**Moon:**

Because you were in law school at that time so you were probably too busy to do some of that work.

**LeZotte:**

Yeah, working full time and going to law school at night, yeah.

**Moon:**

Didn't have a lot of time for that kind of activism.

**LeZotte:**

Just [see what you can do?].

**Moon:**

Yeah, yeah. Well, right now there's a movement that's been -- it's actually been underfoot ever since the amendment, you know, failed ratification. But they're trying to, you know, reinvigorate the movement and try to get an amendment passed, which I don't think will happen. And so my question to you is whether or not you think we actually need to have a federal amendment on equal rights?

**LeZotte:**

I mean, I think it's absurd that we have to have it. But if it -- you know, if it helps to stop the Christian Right, or -- you know, I'm a Catholic, but they're way off. Way out there. If it puts in place certain things, you know, like healthcare and things like that, then, yes. You know, for women to get equal access to the healthcare and whatever they may need, reproductive, you know, then yes. I think there are enough local laws in the book with regard to discrimination and employment and all of that other things, but it's the stuff that the Congress and the courts control.

**Moon:**

Yeah, I think it'd be more of a symbolic sort of gesture, and I don't think we generally create federal amendments for symbols, you know, to --

**LeZotte:**

Well, besides if they tack something on to it.

**Moon:**

Well, they would tack something on to it and it probably wouldn't necessarily -- like they tried to do in the '50s with the Hayden rider which was, you know, the whole sort of, you know, reliving of the Fundamentalist Right sort of behavior in Congress. But OK, well, I think that's -- you know, I'm studying the ERA, that's one of my big projects and so I'm just -- it's good to get some insight from other people who have, you know, kind of lived through that era. I had spoken with a very well known historian, feminist historian, her name is Karen Offen, and she writes on French feminism, but she's written a lot about kind of the meaning of feminism and I was asking her that same question last week and she said she didn't think that it would be successful but that also it wasn't necessary because we had other laws that already kind of took -- replaced some of the problems that were there, but of course that doesn't mean that women necessarily have parity, you know, in society, but.

**LeZotte:**

No.

**Moon:**

It certainly is interesting.

**LeZotte:**

[Especially if you want to change?] behavior with laws.

**Moon:**

Well, you don't.

**LeZotte:**

Unless you lock people up.

**Moon:**

Right, exactly.

**LeZotte:**

Other than that, I mean, look at all -- that's one of the things I said with all [those?] ethics stuff that we're, you know, constraining ourselves with. I said, "Fine, put it there." It's the unethical person isn't going to pay any attention to it. The ethical person doesn't need that. You know, I mean, but. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) is a measurement, and we're going to slap someone around.

**Moon:**

Well, I guess part of it's also to make, maybe, people who are the voters think that, you know, the politicians are concerned about ethics perhaps, but yeah, so that -- well, thank you so much for giving me your time, but could I just get you to fill this out? This is just a brief bio that I can just add, and then this is the oral history release. And so I'll give you one copy and I'll sign it for you and then take the other one back, and what this will allow me to do is put it into the library and then --

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