

LINDA – Fieldnotes – May 25, 2007

Subject: Interview with Rebecca Gilmore, President of Young Women’s Auxiliary Group, Mormon Church

Location: Her home, 706 Riverside Drive #8E (at 148th)

Time: approx 10:05-11:30

68p  
171

[did not turn off tape recorder, so nothing useful after 1hr 16min]

I rode the M4 bus to Broadway between 147<sup>th</sup> and 148<sup>th</sup> so I could see the neighborhood. There were lots of people walking around on Broadway, mostly in casual dress. Men wore pants and colorful short-sleeve button-down shirts, or jeans and t-shirts, or uniforms. Women wore cotton polo shirts with cropped pants, tank tops and cropped jeans, or skirts. Stores proclaiming Dominican merchandise dotted a busy commercial thoroughfare including banks, small restaurants, and groceries. The block between 147<sup>th</sup> and 148<sup>th</sup> includes a 99 cent store. As I walked down 147<sup>th</sup>, I heard a helicopter pass, then another. There was a young man on the stoop of a building, wearing a wifebeater and baggy long jean shorts. He looked up at the second helicopter I heard. I glimpsed something that looked like a military helicopter: long, gray, without large windows.

Rebecca lives in an old building in a neighborhood that I’m guessing is West Harlem. [I forgot to ask her about the neighborhood.] After entering one set of doors, I got buzzed into a lobby with a tiled floor (small white tiles, about 2cm square, with black tiles forming decorative patterns), trompe l’oeil paintings on one wall, large mirrors covering two other walls, two chandeliers, and intricate molding on the walls and ceiling. A large vase and a bronze-colored sculpture (didn’t look too closely, a cherubic figure) sat on a sideboard. Bronze-colored flat sculptures featuring faces also hung on the wall. [Everything is slightly dingy, so it looks quaint and slightly cheesy to me, rather than elegant.]

I took the elevator to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Rebecca met me in the hallway with a loud welcome. She was wearing a fitted black t-shirt, khaki pants cropped at the knee, and brown sneakers. Her shoulder-length blonde hair was pulled back in a low ponytail. She had blue eyes and was wearing no makeup. She looked to be in her thirties.

She seems very outgoing. In her doorway she grasped my hand very firmly and led me through a maze of rooms, including a large kitchen full of cookies, and into a living room with large windows overlooking the Hudson River and toys scattered around the room. She went straight to the window, putting her hands on the sill and looking outside. We could see two helicopters moving around a large grassy area surrounded by trees. She told me it was Fleet Week, and when I told her I heard the Navy was coming in, she explained where the ships dock.

She then started clearing things from the brown couch, including a blue blanket,

explaining that she had been taking care of a boy whose mother was in the hospital for 3 weeks, and she was still clearing his things. He had just left. She remarked that her boys would have loved to see the helicopters, but they were in school.

She invited me to sit down and I picked up the three cushions that were on “my” end of the couch. I explained that I had gotten her name from Karen before she left for Indonesia. Rebecca sat on the other end, and I asked her if she’d be comfortable with me taping. She said something like, sure, then a timer went off. She excused herself to the kitchen, telling me she was baking cookies. I told her I could get myself organized. As she was in the kitchen, I pulled out the consent forms, my tape recorder, and paper. (I had forgotten my notebook at home, so I brought plain paper from the office.)

When she returned she told me that she was baking cookies. Everyone loved her cookies, so why not sell them? She told me she was working on an order from a neighbor from upstairs. She let me know that she would periodically need to return to the kitchen.

I asked if I could tell her about the project. She told me she read the description I had sent her, so I briefly said we were looking at settings for education in Harlem. I started the tape and she asked if she should close the window to reduce the noise made by the helicopters.

Handing her a chart of the organizational structure, I told her I talked with Karen. I explained that Karen had taught me a lot of new terms, such as ward and stake and branch. I asked her about organizational structure, letting her know that I realized that there were a lot of holes in my understanding. She looked at it intently and immediately started commenting, teaching me about the various auxiliary groups.

Young Men’s group  
Aaronic  
Melcheznik

Melcheznik—the higher priesthood, divided into the Elders and the High Priests

- Elders and High priests have different responsibilities, not necessarily one above the other

Aaronic

- 12-13 year olds are **deacons**, in charge of collecting the fast offerings from people’s homes. In a normal setting, not necessarily Manhattan
- 14-15 yos are **teachers**, go out and teach, to comfort and teach with their dads
- 16-17, 18 yos are **priests**, who prepare and bless the sacrament

Interview with bishop to see if they are worthy of advancing. His counselors do a lot too. It’s good that he delegates

Second counselor

RG: Oh let me get you my handbook

Linda: Oh that would be great

Linda: Oh I forgot to do this [consent forms]

RG: waves me away when I try to explain the risks and benefits, etc., hands me back the form

RG: You can basically take this, give it back to me sometime, since I do refer to it sometimes.

The book: "Every person gets this book." I explain that I went on line to look for this without finding it, got into the testimonials and spent hours online.

She explains that she is supposed to meet with her counselor once a month "in the real world."

While talking, she periodically ran to the kitchen to take out her cookies.

Somebody came by from upstairs: a neighbor whose oven she was requisitioning to make more cookies.

Her mom called during the interview.